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Re-imagining Modern Dance as Transnational Phenomenon
Through the Lens of Yoga

By

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DISSERTATION

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In

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of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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2015

This dissertation is dedicated to a past, present, and future that is ever changing in the constant renewal of creative process; to my yoga family, teachers and sangham whose presence have encouraged me to express the deep mysticism and wisdom of life experiences through many forms of art, scholarship, and service; to my dance lineage, friends, and artists who have inspired me to know the fullness of breath in my body and being; to my mother for teaching me that anything is possible if I am open and willing to work for change; to my father who instilled in me a love of writing and the knowledge that I am free to make choices; and to my partner whose friendship, trust, and support helped me fulfill my potential in the writing of this dissertation.

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ABSTRACT

Over the past 150 years yoga philosophy and asana practices have circulated to the U.S. and been incorporated into various modern dance techniques. Aspects of yoga are present in the dance community and practice through posture exercises in warm-ups, approaches to the creative process of making choreography utilizing theories of space, and performance philosophies through understanding of the relationship of the mind, self, body, and breath. Yoga philosophy and asana practice worked alongside and discreetly contributed to the development of modern dance in the U.S. beginning with dancers and choreographers in the early 1900s and continue in contemporary practice today.

This dissertation re-imagines modern dance as transnational phenomenon through the lens of yoga. The methodology utilized for this examination is an interdisciplinary approach that includes research of dance literature, film, and performance practice to trace the circulation of ideas and exchange in these two practices and points of contact and acculturation between artists. In addition to a historical and contextual overview, there are interviews with internationally recognized modern, postmodern, and contemporary dance teachers and choreographers. The yoga-in-dance narrative also embraces an experiential perspective weaving my dance experience as a choreographer, performer, and teacher through self-inquiry and questioning.

How have yoga practices circulated to the U.S. and become incorporated into modern dance teaching, technique, and choreography? What does it mean for a tradition when artists in a different country approach the practice without the same identifying notions? How are contemporary modern dance teachers and choreographers experimenting with yoga philosophy and asana as a way of knowing and creating relationship with the body, the self, and the earth through movement?

Yoga has influenced dance technique teaching, choreography, and performance through changes and shifts in practice and artistic exchange through friendship, conversation, flow, and collaboration. The circumstances under which threads of yoga practice have become blended into modern dance provide perspectives that communicate a history and experience of displacement in representation and cultural ownership. This generates a need for the recognition of difference in past and present aesthetics. Yoga textualities in dance practice and performance also cultivate situated knowledges as ways of knowing through holistic awareness, friendship in collaborative exchange, and synergy. This dissertation generates possibilities for dancing bodies to re-imagine questions of transmission, diaspora, and the experience of creative impulse in artistic process.

CHAPTER ONE

PERFORMING THE SELF

(ENTRANCE INTO THE SPACE OF THE PAPER PERFORMANCE)

Welcome. Welcome to this performance of yoga-in-dance on paper.

My first gesture is to smile because I am imagining three dimensional bodies moving across the landscape of my flat two dimensional computer screen word document.

Because of this image, before I begin the dissertation writing and engage in a textual conversation about the body, dance and yoga, I take a moment to move back from the laptop, stand up, and elongate my spine. I perform a hatha yoga stretch and take a few deep breaths.

Breathing is a simple process where the air flows in and out of my lungs. When my body and organs are relaxed, the breath is not bound. In Hatha Yoga, the breathing technique of pranayama assists in bringing in vital air in movement. Pranayam is a Sanskrit word separated into two parts. Prana is the “extension of the pran or breath” and yama “extension or drawing out of life force.”

First, I hold my body as tight as I can by tensing all of my muscles making every sinew in my body tight. Now I release and relax the muscles so that my body rests with ease. I root my feet into the floor by placing my legs directly underneath my shoulders. My weight relaxes into gravity by releasing lightly behind my knees. I try bouncing ever so gently. As I breathe naturally, I feel my diaphragm expand and release in my ribcage. I start by breathing in through the nose and reaching my arms over my head into the yogic posture of Mountain pose, extending the legs at the same time. Then I breathe out, drawing the arms back to my side, and softening the knees.

As I do this practice in one deep breath, I feel the space between the lines of my torso, arms, and legs expand and relax with each inhale and each exhale.

My hands reach over my head in one deep breath, inhale. Return the arms, exhale.

Inhale. Exhale.

I tap my physical body with my hands starting with the top of the head, face, shoulders, and continuing through my arms to get energy flowing. My body vibrates.

Now I try this exercise with my eyes closed a couple of times.

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When I am done, I return my focus to this page .

Pranayama is a fundamental practice of yoga. *Yoga Journal* suggests, “Pranayama serves as an important bridge between the outward active practices of yoga – like asana – and the internal surrendering practices that lead into a deeper state of meditation.”¹ Used as a technique

to support movement, pranayama assists in listening and focusing in a deeper state of practice and performance. As I breath in, the oxygen circulates through my physical form and merges with cells, atoms, organs, and skin. So as I inhale, by focusing on the breath with my mind, my thoughts become quiet and I experience a state of inner listening. As I exhale, the air emerges back out of my body and into the space around me.

inhale, exhale

merging and emerging

breath between the lines of form and shape in the body

It is with this simple awareness of my mind, body, and breath that I begin this project.

CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCTION: YOGA AND DANCE IN THE U.S.

There are many perceptions about what yoga is in the U.S., and what yoga-in-dance practice means. A single definition is not agreed upon by various communities who practice yoga-in-dance. Yoga has exploded in popular culture to mean everything from commercialized aerobic exercise, to training a dancer's body for performance, to a spiritual path with a deep history. Recently I saw a commercial on television that was advertising lessons in "surf yoga." The clip featured an attractive young person hanging ten over the edge of a surf board while standing in eagle pose. There are now yoga rave dance jams in clubs, cool break dance yoga, surya namaskara contemporary yoga dance happenings in colleges, and events like yoga booty ballet which advertises "so much more than your average cardio dance class."

What is striking is the enthusiasm behind which everyone is owning their own understanding of yoga. "I do yoga" has become the "it" phrase, a very cool way to let your friends and neighbors know that you are hip, global, and fit. The yoga body has become a transnational representation of health and wellbeing pictured on the pages of glossy magazines like *Yoga Journal* and media channels workout sessions. In the commercialized yoga world, the attention is on the external practice of asana. Yoga as it is practiced in many fitness centers across the U.S. is big business. The commodification of the practice changes the transmission of historical or cultural context.

This dissertation is not solely focused on the origins of yoga or the development of yoga in the U.S. Rather, I am interested in an intervention that traces a few moments of transmission and reception in exchanges between dancers and yoga practitioners. I propose that this

transmission may have occurred in the exchange of human interaction and sharing of tacit knowledge between bodies, and, that various yoga practices have worked alongside modern, postmodern, and contemporary dance in the U.S. and been one of the many contributing forces to the development of this dance style. I am also interested in the space of yoga-in-dance, both in the studio and in training a dancer's body, and in the presence of transmission that I have received from my dance and meditation teachers in the way that this informs, shapes, and cultivates ideas around creative inspiration, community sharing, and qualities of kindness.

Yoga has danced across borders and has been translated, interpreted, reimagined, and sometimes shifted into an entirely new space. This space I am referring to is a transnational space where ideas and practices of yoga have moved from India and then circulated globally, although I will focus on the circulation that occurs in India, Europe, and the U.S. There are also other temporal spaces of exchange. These spaces include the space of time, the space of the studio, the space of the choreographic creation, the space of the performers intention, the space of friendship, and the space of the heart. I am writing this dissertation in chapters (on the space of the page) that move, flow, jump, leave, fall off center, shift, crash, circle around, and breathe in these spaces.

Chapter Outline and Methodology

The project utilizes an interdisciplinary approach to establishing critical voices that help establish moments of contact and acculturation between dance and yoga practices. The main areas that ground this study and inspire my research include: 1) the area of early modern dance autobiographies, film, and audio recordings of classes; 2) the growing scholarship on practice research in performance studies and interviews with contemporary yoga dance practitioners; 3)

new and emerging historical and spiritual texts on yoga in the United States; and 4) an experiential perspective, weaving my own dance and yoga perspectives as an artist and choreographer through self inquiry and questioning. I give an overview of some of the primary sources I referenced in this research in the following chapter outline.

Justifying cultural appropriation is one of the postcolonial concerns of piecing together a theoretical framework comprised of non-linear moments in the history of yoga and dance. Yet as I navigated the history of yoga and dance interactions, the training I've received from my teachers, and my own experiences in the creative process as a dancer, choreographer, and projection designer, I found moments of contact and acculturation that did not seem to be limbs on part of one family tree. Rather, these experiences appeared to me like separate moments in a very expansive field that seen together creates a fertile ground for understanding how this movement was growing in diverse locations over time. Rather than a linear history, this creates the possibility for being aware of a non-linear connectivity that can be arrived at from any perspective or time in space.

The dissertation is subdivided into six chapters. In between the entrance and exit from the performative space of the paper, the chapters look historically at encounters between dancers, artists, philosophers, and practitioners of yoga in the early 1900s in the U.S. and at present insight into the work of contemporary teachers and choreographers experimenting with yoga philosophy in the classroom. The text presents a critical analysis that explores what it means for a tradition when artists in a different country or culture approach a practice without the same identifying notions, and include a close reading of my creative practice incorporating yoga philosophy in the making of a choreography and dance film. These chapters are briefly described below.

In contemporary dance choreography, there is always a start to a performance. A defining moment with the dance begins. Chapter One “Performing the Self (Entrance Into the Space of the Paper Performance)” is a performative way of entering into the space of this dissertation with a description of a yoga breath exercise. Chapter Two, “Introduction: Yoga and Dance in the U.S.,” provides an overview of aspects of yoga in current dance practices. Established is an overview of each chapter with a brief literature, performance, and media review. I also present and discuss the various methodologies employed in this research.

Chapter Three, “Early Influences: Tracing the Connectivity of Early Modern Dance in Yoga,” includes a brief overview of how modern dance has worked alongside the development of yoga in the U.S. through blending yoga posture technique and philosophy in studio teaching, training, and performance. This chapter outlines and provides historical and contextual background for yogic influences in modern dance through film, literature, and encounters between artists. Ideas such as dance in holistic relationship to the mind, self, body, and breath are concepts that are woven into the fabric of understanding the multiplicity of ways in which yoga philosophy and dance movement practices intersect. Established are frameworks for perceiving specific moments in time when modern dance practices worked alongside yoga and influenced dance in posture technique and philosophy in studio teaching, training, and performance, in the process connecting to the theoretical voices that help me create a conversation with these performance practices.

The contributions of early modern dance autobiographies, yoga literature and films, and audio recordings of dance classes in the early 1900s help to trace the circulation of ideas in these two practices and identify points of contact between organizations like the Theosophy Society, and artists performing internationally such as Ruth St. Denis, Doris Humphrey, and Martha

Graham. My intervention is to examine what is missing in the written historical modern dance record in terms of the visibility of the influence of yoga practice and to propose a connectivity of how yoga in the 20th century worked alongside modern dance as a mediating force and continues to have a presence in dance practice today.

A parallel idea in Indian/English literature can be applied to thinking about transnational influences of yoga in early modern dance. Vinay Dharwadkerⁱⁱ in his article “Formations of Indian-English Literature” suggests that when cultures practice “literary production in a language of foreign origin” three histories emerge. One is the “history of the particular modes of contact that link the foreign language and its native users,” another is the “history of the new community’s acquisition of literacy in the foreign language,” and the third element is the “community’s broad acculturation to the ways of life, thought, and expression represented by the foreign language.”ⁱⁱⁱ This framework is useful to apply to thinking about the contact and affect of yoga literature, films, and practices circulating in the U.S. during the early development of modern dance. In the postcolonial encounter, yoga could be conceived as a metaphor for a “foreign language.” The effect yoga has had on the U.S. dance culture can be perceived in how the practice of breath and asana have shifted from a philosophy and meditation practice to include a kind of cosmopolitan zing and commercial performativity in dance films, stage performances, and training.

This chapter references early modern dance autobiographies, film, and audio recordings of classes and new and emerging historical work on yoga in the United States. The film and audio recordings include archival research at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.

Some of the early modern dance texts are written by dance teachers and choreographers. I particularly acknowledge the autobiographies of Ruth St. Denis and Martha Graham because it is in their written memories and recollections of dance practice that I found connections to yoga philosophy and experiences. My formal university based dance training has been primarily situated at The Juilliard School in New York (B.F.A. in Dance) and twenty years later at the University of California, Irvine (M.F.A. in Dance). Interestingly, Ruth St. Denis was working in both New York City and Los Angeles and influenced dancers in these locations. My experience with dance teachers and professors from these institutions who are locally trained in these cities, is part of how I make links back to St. Denis and Graham.

Ruth St. Denis's *An Unfinished Life*, is an autobiographical account of her progression as a performer from vaudeville to the concert stage, provides a description of her work as co-director of the acclaimed Denishawn school of dance, and gives an overview of the development of her theatrical dance styles based on interpretations of Asian dance forms. This chapter focuses on the work she created inspired by philosophical ideas and art images from India. Ruth's artistic partner, Ted Shawn, wrote an account of some of her choreographic work in *Ruth St. Denis: Pioneer and Prophet – being a History of Her Cycle of Oriental Dances* and their tours throughout Europe and India. *Divine Dancer: A Biography of Ruth St. Denis* written by Suzanne Shelton is a fairly comprehensive look at the legacy St. Denis passed on to numerous dancers such as Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman. Many of her students went on to establish well known modern dance careers and are the foundational lineages on the modern dance family tree of many notable performers and choreographers today. Elizabeth Kendall's *Where She Danced* examines women's issues that artists such as St. Denis were encountering in the early 1900s. Also briefly mentioned is Isadora Duncan. Several books and articles about

Isadora Duncan explore the early modern dance territory such as Ann Daly's *Done Into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America*.

Nancy Lee Chalfa Ruyter's article "American Delsartism: Precursor of an American Dance Art" points to connections of Hindu Philosophy in "Delsartian aesthetic gymnastics"^{iv} created by Francois Delstarte in and Genevieve Stebbins and studied by dancers like Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis. Martha Graham's *Blood Memory* is a personal memoir of her dance performance, teaching, and choreography career. In this autobiography she describes her apprenticeship with the Denishawn Company and her struggles to survive artistically as a woman and artist in the early 20th century with her own dance company. She also briefly discusses kundalini yoga and chakras.^v Jacqueline Shea Murphy's *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing* cites connections to Native American influences in Graham's concert dance. Reading Shea Murphy's book made me wonder if yogic philosophy and movement practices interacted with modern dance in a similar way in the same time period. There is a rewarding mix of commentary on cultural developments outside the early 1900s canon of European aesthetic influences on modern dance makers, for example Shea Murphy on Native American influences, Brenda Dixon Gottschild's *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool* on African influences, and Priya Srinivasan's *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* on Indian influences. These works have helped me think through the ideas that take center stage at any given time, the people who are privileged to establish them, and those who are not.

Gay Morris's *A Game for Dancers* outlines how modern dancers in the 1940s and 50s presented themselves in print media through autobiographies and articles as a way of interpreting and legitimizing their work. A key element here is their need to have a practice that is institutionalized for survival purposes was at odds with their avante-garde philosophy.

Stefanie Syman's book *The Subtle Body: The Story of Yoga in America*^{vi} illustrates a history of transformation for yoga in the U.S. as her story traces various pathways and proponents of yoga beginning with Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson in the 1800s up to Michelle Obama in the present. Syman finds that defining yoga in U.S. society is a complex undertaking because "American Society has been able to assimilate any number of versions of it, more or less simultaneously."^{vii} The social acceptance of yoga has moved over the course of 100 years from unusual early purveyors of yoga such as Swami Vivekananda's presentations about Hinduism at The World Parliament of Religions as part of the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. It now welcomes widespread public and social acceptance of commercialized hatha yoga in fitness facilities in towns across the country, as well as yoga as spiritual practice found in more private sectors in ashrams. Syman suggests that the history of yoga in the U.S. is "not a unified system."^{viii} She addresses the effect training in yoga posture has on dancers in the film industry such as Hollywood dancers like Marge Champion who is quoted as saying "Yoga works on muscles I never used in dancing. I mean, my upper inner thighs are really tight now. You couldn't get that tautness no matter how many barre pliés you do."^{ix} Hollywood dancers advocating for hatha yoga gave high profile publicity to posture practice.

Postural yoga in the U.S. is increasingly visible in private yoga studios and multi-million dollar commercial exercise entities. The term postural yoga means *yogasana* or physical practice and encompasses the many diverse styles and techniques of yoga that utilize posture. Mark Singleton's research in *The Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice*^x suggests that modern postural yoga today in the United States is greatly influenced by European physical culture, bodybuilding, and women's gymnastics as well as the acculturation of Indian nationalism in Europe and the U.S. Singleton proposes that the "The primacy of asana

performance in transnational yoga today is a new phenomenon that has no parallel in premodern times.”^{xi} While this is a controversial thesis, Singleton’s work is part of the growing research in posture yoga that traces historical influences on what is a multi-billion dollar exercise phenomenon in the United States. This book helped me think through the historical flow and presence of yoga manuals, new interpretations of the international physical culture movement in body building and university exercise programs, the nationalist Hindu representation of asana, and the idea of the merging of “the reinvention of asana as a timeless expression of Hindu exercise”^{xii} working alongside spaces and places where modern dancers were developing dance technique and choreography.

Shreena Niketa Divyakant Gandhi, in her dissertation *Translating, Practicing, and Commodifying Yoga in the U.S.*^{xiii} also highlights the acculturation of practice in yoga. While her paper focuses on both yoga as posture exercise and spiritual philosophy, she pays close attention to how “the translation of yoga” is commodified through the American religious market and the market of capitalism. Gandhi argues that yoga is successful in the U.S. because of its focus on “practice” and this can be seen through “attempting to discern what people have done and continue to do when they maintain they are practicing yoga.”^{xiv}

Key to this study of the growing acculturation of yoga practices in the U.S. during the twentieth century is my appreciation for the strength, value and longevity of the Indian tradition. While there are scholars who argue that the circulation of yoga internationally is an appropriation, this study is based on my belief in the capacity for this traditional form to contribute positively to other cultures, rather than be perceived to be being exploited by them. Just as English language speakers welcome the history of Japanese ‘Shakespeare’ because they

are confident in their linguistic legacy, so this thesis positions yoga as a world culture with many different interpretive possibilities.

Chapter Four, “Reinvention, Transformation, and Physical Culture: The Crossroads of Training in Dance and Yoga Practices,” takes a multi-sited approach. This chapter focuses on training the dancer’s body and yoga in choreography by tracing a brief overview of yoga in dance in the 1960s to the present. Through a review of popular dance magazines in the U.S. there is an exploration of what it means for a body of dance knowledge when dancers or yoga practitioners from different cultures approach a practice without the same identifying notions. I draw upon feminist principles to ground my study on Donna Haraway’s notion of “situated knowledges.” I also dialogue with Lynette Hunter’s ideas around “situated textualities” and dis-unified aesthetics engaging with Hunter’s own words of “alongside,” “unsaid,” “arrest,” and “until,” issues of representation and cultural ownership in dance practices.

In the contemporary modern dance classroom and in performances today, yoga textualities are quietly incorporated into practice and performance. This presence provides situated knowledges that communicate a past history and present experience of displacement through textualities. In the flow of creative processes, the circumstances under which the presence of yoga practice have been invisibilized and blended into modern dance generates a need for the recognition of difference between past and present aesthetics in issues of representation and cultural ownership. Specific areas explored include thinking through the intersection of yoga and modern dance in the U.S., forms of cultural production and consumption, and ways of knowing through asana practice and meditation in dance performance and studio practice.

This chapter also looks holistically at exchanges of friendship between artists and focuses on conversations I had with two U.S. dance practitioners, Loretta Livingston (California) and Uttara Asha Coorlawala (New York) who incorporate yoga postures and philosophy in choreography and in teaching in the dance classroom. Livingston is a postmodern dance teacher and choreographer in California who has had a big influence on the way I teach dance technique. Coorlawala's choreography and scholarship examining yoga in dance helped me think through the Practice as Research segment of this dissertation.

My methodology for Chapter Four is a dialogue with these artists' stated intentions as they are presented in newspaper clippings, online websites, program notes, and interviews. I circulate any quotes and text I have written about these dancers to them directly so they have the opportunity to edit or change anything I have written before it was published.

I also present observations from yoga dance classes at the American College Dance Festival Association annual conference and a questionnaire survey given to students at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa dance technique classes. This study includes observing and participating in classes, interviews with the artists, and a questionnaire handout with students and dancers in these environments. The lived experience of these dancers provides a wealth of valuable corporeal knowledge and an opportunity to make visible the voices of artists teaching in the studio and creating new choreography.

In her book *Gender and Nation* the feminist scholar Nira Yuval-Davis describes the idea of rooting and shifting in transversal politics as a way of creating a "situation of exchange" between people. I find the idea useful for thinking about an embodied conversation with dancers in diverse dance cultures. In her description of encounters in feminist conferences, Yuval-Davis describes this terminology:

The idea is that each participant in the dialogue brings with her the rooting in her own membership and identity, but at the same time tries to shift in order to put herself in a situation of exchange with women who have different membership and identity. They called this form of dialogue “transversalism” – to differentiate from “universalism” which by assuming a homogeneous point of departure ends up being exclusive instead of inclusive, and relativism which assumes that, because of the differential points of departure, no common understanding and genuine dialogue are possible at all.^{xv}

In the oral history project with my interviews and classroom study, I engage with the idea of a “situation of exchange.” I examine the challenges of rooting in my own experience, shifting with the conversations I had with dancers in conversation and in practice, and honoring a place of difference. On these pages I also experiment with a poetic narrative that explores Yuval-Davis’s notion of rooting and shifting as a pathway to think about encountering the performative act of dance and yoga.

Ruth St. Denis is only one artist of her time who engaged with yoga philosophy, and Chapter Two is dedicated to a historical review of these kinds of connections. Miss Ruth, as she was known, trained a whole generation of highly influential dancers including Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weideman to name only a few, and these dancers went on to help form, develop, and teach university dance programs across the country. Some of these dancers were the artistic directors of modern dance companies and teachers of my faculty at Juilliard. Miss Ruth’s subtle incorporation of yoga into modern dance is now buried in the legacy of dance practices and institutions in the United States. Miss Ruth and Martha were all tapping into existing discourses for women and physical culture. Yet the yoga strand is now being not only

implicitly but explicitly expanded, revised, and reinterpreted in modern and contemporary dance practices today.

Contributions from Indian yoga philosophy and asana practice have been invisibilized in modern dance. If we look at the family trees of modern dance, there is evidence of this legacy of cultural politics, in the preferential focus and continued emphasis on Modern and Ballet training (to the exclusion of other styles of movement) and performance in University dance departments, funding agencies, presenting organizations, and critic reviews. Following in Brenda Dixon Gotschild's footsteps to intervene in ethnocentric history, at play here is that not only are modern and ballet privileged in many of these settings, but that modern and ballet in the U.S. are also not limited to Euro-American aesthetics.^{xvi}

Part of the reason that modern dance historical associations with postural yoga and philosophy are not so clearly visible in our texts is to some extent due to structural racism in the university system. Here I identify that "prejudice" is not "personal" and that structural racism could be "societal," "historic," and "institutional" consciously or unconsciously masking visibility of some movement influences.^{xvii} Some see structural racism as a canon issue and others see it as a more complex issue that includes research methodology as well as faculty and student diversity.^{xviii} By breathing into this idea, we can continue to expand our texts and be open to new ideas in innovative pedagogies in dance studies, performance practices, and the academic classroom. This enables a deep breath of change in our dance community that begins within each one of us.

Chapter Five, "A Personal Journey: Dancing Yoga (Practice)" is a reflective chapter that looks holistically at my creative process in the creation of a new choreography and video projection design from concept to live stage dance performance in the creation of an hour long

production called “Ocean’s Motion” created for a cast of 50 performers. This performance was designed for the annual dance concert in the Department of Theatre and Dance, and, for Theatre for Young Audiences at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in 2011. My creative process incorporated yoga asana in the creation of the modern dance choreography, an experimentation with yoga philosophy in the creative process of developing the video projection design, and a reflection on the process of the collaborative team.

In this chapter I embrace an experiential perspective and weave a narrative of my own dance experiences as a choreographer and artist through self inquiry and questioning. I experiment by writing through my process poetically. My project looks at changes and shifts in my practice through conversation with self and performers, synergy, connectivity, visual rhythm, patterns, flow, collaboration, and open spaces that generate freedom. This project culminated in a series of performances that reached over 1000 audience members in Hawai‘i over the course of three weeks. I received the Hawai‘i State Po’okela award for best choreography for this project in collaboration with Amy Schiffner and Kumu Vicky Holt Takamine.

The practice as research (PAR) project interfaces with yoga meditation practices and creative process through reflective awareness, meditation, flow, and breath in movement. The methodology for this section is an attempt at translating the dance and body theorizing itself in words. This research brings to together my current exploratory creative process, over thirty years of dance training, and two decades of meditation and yoga practice. Through documentation of my written journal entries as well as documentation of rehearsals through digital photography and video recordings, I navigate aural sense and concepts of yoga in understanding of the relationships of breath in the body with an exploration of the interaction and affect on the subtle and gross body in choreographic choices. There are multiple relationships between the

performative elements of the video design and the audience so also considered are the visual perception and practice of somatic meditation in the video design process. Through self-inquiry in the creative process, I examine the aesthetics of composition, the venue of the theater, and the role of the audience in order to explain the inseparable and complex elements of the performance.

My analysis of the creative process and the PAR project looks at the notion of Spanda in yoga theory as discussed by Mark S.G. Dyczkowski in the *Stanzas on Vibration*, a translation and commentary of the Indian Kashmiri Saiva text the *Spandakarika*, and how this could be read in dialogue with the creative process of making dance and video projection. I also utilize theories of embodiment and somatic sense to examine the process. Performative strategies in this examination place value on the importance of the process of collaboration and the intricate relationship of the whole in the dance, music, video projection design, audience, memory, and friction that is generated in the creative process that ultimately evokes and generates spanda.

I first encountered the notion of spanda in my meditation and chanting practice. I recall hearing instructors share that how sound moves in the body during chanting, how the breath moves through the body in meditation, or how the wind interacts with the leaves in the trees, is a vibration of consciousness. Dyczkowski defines spanda as “potential energy as the impulse to manifestation” and that “to lay hold of this initial moment of intent is to experience the pulsation of consciousness. It is to grasp the subject just in the moment of his intent to perceive, where consciousness is not yet restricted to any specific object but, free of thought constructs.”^{xix} In yoga theory, this vibration is proposed to move through various elements of being which include the atman (self), the subtle body, and the gross body. The subtle body includes the senses and the mind, and is considered to be interwoven with physical nerves and glands in the gross body.^{xx}

The perception of the subtle body then affects the health of the nerves and organs in the gross body. In light of western science this idea seems irrational but in health practices like Ayurveda, a system of medicine originating in India, this understanding of subtle mind body connectivity plays an important role in over all health.

The notion of spanda can also be applied to an understanding of the creative process. What follows in this chapter is the examination of how I began to generate and respond to the idea of choreographing a dance tracing what I propose to be the impulse of spanda that emerged through my senses and mind from a meditation experience. I allocate quite a bit of space to the development of a concept for this choreography because the somatic process of idea making is part of my practice and often takes a great deal of attention and time to cultivate. This process occurs before I even begin the act of crafting movement or video projection.

Chapter Five focuses on the creation of performance by exploring ten topics including: Place, Creative Process as Performance, The Research Performance Project, Spanda and Accumulation, Bhakti as Felt Memory, Generation and Response Strategies, Meditation and Breathing, Choreography/Improvisation, Video Projection Design, and Public Performance Engaging Audience Practices. Each of these themes explores elements of yoga. The primary focus includes experiences in the creative process by revisiting memories, meditations, and telling stories to make meaning out of a situated way of practicing yoga in dance.

The first section discusses the place of creative process as performance in relation to Doreen Massey's concept of space, Sally Kempton's contemplation the four bodies in Kashmir Shaivism, Martha Eddy's research in somatic practices, Susan Foster's work on kinesthetic empathy, and Shawn Wilson's discussion of relational accountability and indigenous research paradigms. The second section focuses on spanda, and meditation in the making of a video

projection design for Ocean's Motion. How listening with the senses through yoga practice and viewing the filming and editing process are an active meditation in relation to Michael Renov's notions of engaging memory as a way into thinking about selfhood in identity and Alva Noë's premise that the sense of touch, rather than sight, is primary in understanding the experience of the senses in the body.

Chapter Six, "A Performative Exit from Space" is the closing of this performance of text. The reflection is written to poetically evoke the end of a dance. This is not an end that means finality. Rather it is an exit from the performative dancing space of this paper that continues on into further conversations to come.

Each chapter of this dissertation exists as an individual paper. The thread that weaves everything together is the journey of yoga in dance through temporal places of exchange. These places include the space of time, the space of the studio, the space of geographic location, the space of a choreographic creation, the space of the intention of a performer, the space of friendship, and the space of the heart.

To summarize, the dissertation is a performance that begins and ends with an entrance and exit into the space of the paper. My focus in this dissertation is primarily experiential. This research is structured as different ways of telling stories. Chapter Two is an intervention that looks historically at encounters between dancers, artists, philosophers, and practitioners of yoga in the early 1900s in the U.S. to the present. Chapter Three is archival research and provides a brief overview of how modern dance practices worked alongside yoga posture technique and philosophy in studio teaching, training, and performance. Chapter Four explores how contemporary dancers are sharing their stories of yoga-in-dance, and Chapter Five focuses on my

own story and personal journey in the creative process through the making of choreography and video projection design in a dance production.

A few of the questions asked in this research include the following. Historically how have yoga practices circulated to the U.S and become incorporated into modern and postmodern dance teaching, technique, and choreographic practices? What does it mean for a tradition when dancers and yoga practitioners in a different country approach a practice without the same identifying notions? What are the experiential aspects of how yoga may be central to a creative process involving generation and response strategies in collaboration with environment, other performance makers, and with the audience? How is yoga philosophy and asana in dance making a way of knowing and creating a relation with the body, self, place, and earth through movement?

CHAPTER THREE
EARLY INFLUENCES: TRACING THE CONNECTIVITY OF
MODERN DANCE AND YOGA

The philosophy of mind body awareness taught in modern dance has roots in transcendental philosophies that blended Christian, Hindu, and Yogic concepts in the 18th century. This chapter is a brief overview of the development of yoga in the U.S. during the 1800s to early 1900s, and how modern dance worked alongside this development by blending yoga posture technique and philosophy in studio teaching, training, and performance. The historical and contextual background for yogic influences in modern dance through film, literature, and the encounters between artists is outlined. Yoga and modern dance philosophy and practice share concepts such as a holistic relationship to the mind, self, body, and breath.

Contemporary modern dance, with roots in dance practices stemming back to the Denishawn school, is a global transnational phenomenon. The dance practice is an outcome of a collision of varied dance genres and philosophies. This section focuses on one strand of influence in these diverse genres by looking at the hybridization of modern dance with yoga posture and philosophical influences. The ideas found in early modern dance autobiographies, yoga literature and films, and audio recordings of early dance classes in the early 1900s help to trace the link between the circulation of ideas in these two practices and points of contact between movements like Transcendentalism and philosophers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau, and later artists performing internationally such as Ruth St. Denis and Martha Graham. This chapter explores the visibility of the influence of yoga practice in modern dance. There is a connectivity of how yoga in the 20th century worked alongside modern dance as a mediating

force and continues to have a presence in modern dance practice today that will be discussed in the following sections. My own dance experiences were part of what led me to make these connections. I begin with a brief account of my experience of learning dance and yoga in New York, an experience that underwrites the direction of this dissertation.

A Personal Experience of Dance Training in New York

In the early nineties I was a dance student at The Juilliard School in New York City where a great deal of training emphasis was on the study of modern and ballet dance techniques. Shortly after graduating, I was introduced to the yoga and meditation that have been an active part of my life for the past 20 years. When I first encountered this yoga practice, I remember thinking “wow, I’ve found a spiritual path that reminds me so much of my dance training.” By this I mean my modern dance training was not as much concerned with performance as it was with a mode of knowing performance and performativity. For example my teachers often emphasized an internal focus on awareness and breath. This experience was general enough that I didn’t think much at the time about making the connections. This “feeling” of interconnectivity was also rooted more in my experience of learning modern dance than ballet at Juilliard.

I began to make non-linear connections between how I was trained in dance and my yoga experiences as I thought back through the accumulation of how I learned and understood creative process during this period of dance study in college in New York. Later in this chapter I will discuss the lineage of modern dance teachers who influenced this realization. But first a story. I thought back to how, much like the posture practice of yoga in exercise studios, in modern dance dancers may spend endless hours focusing on line and form. This outward focus on the line of the body, on how the foot is arched or the leg extends at a 90 angle with perfect turnin or turnout,

is part of a modern dancer's practice in many ways. In my college training I also learned that a focus on inward meditation and creative process is a valuable tool for performing and creating choreography. A technique I learned in modern dance was to be fully present and aware with my thoughts while dancing. Being able to visualize a leap, a turn, or a dramatic intention internally assists with actualizing the movement externally with precision. Sometimes the modern dance teachers would suggest we (the dance students) create a visual image or story to internally transport our dramatic intention when dancing. I recall several different modern dance teachers telling me to do things like visualize the feeling and color of grass under my feet or see a flowing waterfall or golden arch on the other side of the room as I performed triplets or traveled through space hurling my body in rolls across the floor. These visualization exercises were very similar to the practice of yoga dharanas in that they were designed to focus concentration. The internal awareness helped me make the leap from the inside out to being clear, articulate, and focused in performance. Internal awareness also leads to going with the flow and being open to new possibilities which are not always so clearly defined at the beginning of creative process. I recall one of my modern dance choreography teachers telling our class to go to a museum and study paintings for inspiration. The goal of the exercise was to invite the colors, lines, and forms to wash over internal awareness. Then, be open to these experiences of art to collide with imagination, to allow space for links to randomness, and then see what emerges choreographically. What I learned from visualization and awareness as a creative process was to allow space in myself for ideas to collide without needing to make order out of them instantaneously. When applied to movement practice, I discovered that what happens between the lines of a gesture, such as the thrust of a pelvis off center or the tossing of a messy arm, the murkiness of perceptual awareness and felt body experiences in the process of discovering

movement, is what is the interesting site of investigation for me personally. It is in the awareness of that messiness that I find meaning. The kind of meaning I am describing is the act of tuning into moments of aha in the middle of non-linear exploration. I observe that when movement is being explored improvisationally for performance or choreography, there is a heightened sense of liveness and attuned awareness to space and time present in a body. In choreography a lot of messy movement accidents, messy lines, messy movement phrase ideas, messy experiences, gets thrown away or so refined for a final dance performance or a final execution of a yoga posture series that a viewer no longer see the original impulse or feeling of an experience.

As I thought non-linearly through connections I had experienced in my modern dance and yoga practice, it was in the spirit of internal listening and messiness that I was surprised to find myself looking through old autobiographies and notes from early modern dancers in the 1920s to follow a feeling. My gut told me there was an impulse, a gesture or gestures of yoga philosophy and asana embedded somehow in my modern dance practice that either became so refined as a new dance form that the roots were no longer recognizable, or were discarded as an identifiable form with only the ghost tracing left. During the research for this study, I found a box of old photographs in my closet that I had been given in the 1990s. As I was looking through this pile of images, I came across a 1930s picture of Ruth St. Denis that had been given to me in Grand Rapids, Michigan on a dance tour in the mid-west. Finding this image was another signpost that encouraged me to continue thinking about connections between yoga and modern dance in my own training as many of my college dance teachers could trace their dance lineage back to her well known Denishawn school.

The photo of Miss Ruth (as she was affectionately known) came to me from a happenstance meeting with a former student of hers in Grand Rapids, Michigan in the 1990s. In

1998 I was teaching a workshop for the Sacred Dance Guild at Grand Rapids Presbyterian church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This was a workshop to introduce people of all ages to how they might conceive of incorporating dance into their weekly Protestant services. Each of these two day events began with a modern dance warm-up. At the end of the first day warm-up, an elderly fellow hobbled over to me assisted by his round wooden cane. I still remember that cane clicking across the hard linoleum church floor because he walked with the astute presence of a performer who had aged well. When he spoke to me, peering through his thick glasses with a sparkley glint in his eyes, he said, "My name is Forrest Coggins and you remind me of Ruth St. Denis." No one had ever made that comparison before. I was surprised and intrigued. I was also baffled how this elderly man in the Midwest would even know of Miss Ruth. As we continued to chat I learned that Forrest had studied with Miss Ruth and Ted Shawn during summer workshops in upstate New York. He said he remembered her presence as goddess like and very grandiose. Worried that I might be coming off as a diva, because these early modern dance makers were occasionally known for their self promotion of spit fire genius and I had heard many a story to this effect in my dance training, I asked Forrest if I was behaving badly. He responded very kindly and said, "No, it's not you the person that reminds me of Ruth, it's the manner in which you teach your class." I interpreted his suggestion of "manner" to mean the movement vocabulary, the use of breath, and visualization exercises that focused on internal awareness incorporated into the dance workshop. We had several friendly chats about his experiences with Miss Ruth and he offered to send me the trunk of archives he had of her.

At that time I was so very young, moving often between apartments in New York, that I could not conceive of carrying around a trunk of another dancer's archives. Now I am remorseful that I did not accept this generous treasure. On the last day of the workshop, Forrest gave me a

photo of Miss Ruth. It was a copy of a copy, on which he signed, “to kara, with love forrest.” I did not think of this event until fourteen years later, when I began to wonder if Forrest Coggins understood something I hadn’t even considered, that the dance teaching style I inherited contained traces that could be rooted in a Denishawn philosophy, and perhaps that philosophy somehow had an opaque connection to the practice of yoga in America.

The modern dance class I was teaching in Grand Rapids was modeled after my own training. The memory of my experience with Forrest Coggins was part of what sent me looking back through the archives and the hybridity of my own dance training lineage. As I began to reflect on my modern dance instructors, one common factor I discovered is that all of my modern/postmodern dance teachers studied or danced with artists who can historically trace a lineage or connection in training to instruction by Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn’s Denishawn school. Yoga practitioners taught at and interacted with Denishawn. Their teachers were greatly influenced by Denishawn so I include a brief overview of this lineage.

Ruth St. Denis and her dance partner Ted Shawn greatly impacted the development of modern dance in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. They founded a school called Denishawn that trained students who went onto be well known modern dancers such as Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey.^{xxi} Louis Horst composed scores for Denishawn and also taught dance composition for schools that Graham and Humphrey were teaching at including Bennington Dance Festival at Bennington College in Connecticut in the 1940s and 1950s.^{xxii} Graham and Humphrey went on to found renown dance companies that trained a generation of dancers such as José Limón, Paul Taylor, and Erick Hawkins. Limón was a student of Humphrey. Taylor and Hawkins danced with Martha Graham.

My dance teachers trained with many of these artists. I list them here because thinking through this lineage helped me make about the transmission of yoga in movement philosophy and ideas in my own training. My modern dance teachers include: while I was in High School in Indiana, Vera Orlock at Indiana University, and Laura Pettibone and Erick Hawkins at the Erick Hawkins studio in New York, my undergraduate studies at Juilliard in New York City with modern dance faculty Laura Glenn, Ethel Winter, Jane Kosminsky, Carolyn Adams, and choreography faculty Liz Keene and Doris Rudko, and my graduate work at the University of California, Irvine with Donald McKayle, Loretta Livingston, and Lisa Naugle. Orlock and Pettibone studied and danced with the Erick Hawkins dance company. In New York, Glenn danced with the José Limón Dance Company, Winter and McKayle with the Martha Graham Company, Kosminsky and Adams with the Paul Taylor Company, and Keene and Rudko were teaching choreography based on dance making strategies by Louis Horst and Doris Humphrey. In California, Livingston was a company member with Bella Lewitsky, and Lewitsky studied with Lester Horton who was influenced by Denishawn.

I acknowledge there is a complexity of diverse practices that may inform these instructors' teaching strategies about perceptual awareness and performativity. Two of these instructors, Juilliard faculty Laura Glenn, and U.C.I. faculty Loretta Livingston, consciously incorporated yoga asana and breathing exercises as part of their technique class warm-up and training. In Chapter Four I share a conversation with Livingston and reflect on her work. The question that arose for me in thinking about my modern dance teachers was the following: Is there a lineage of yoga philosophy embedded and obscured in modern dance principles of motion and philosophies of performativity in the dance training techniques of all my modern dance

teachers? This question sent me back in time to look for connections in yoga philosophies and literature that were circulating in the U.S. in the early 1800s.

Historical Overview of the Development of Yoga Philosophy in the 1800s in the U.S.: Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau

Early modern dance artists such as Ruth St. Denis and Martha Graham do not claim to put yoga at the center of their practice nor was it emphasized strongly in their autobiographies. St. Denis and Graham synthesized and were inspired by a variety of philosophical ideas to form their art form. Yet visible in photos, recorded interviews, and audio tapes, it appears yoga is one force that was working alongside the development of their dance technique and at the same time working within a creative process that contributes to the legacy of modern dance practices today. Some aesthetic and movement philosophies of modern dance training today have their roots in early Transcendentalism, Vedanta, and Hindu Philosophy in popular literature of the 1800s. Suzanne Shelton talks about St. Denis's connection to Vedanta saying, "The genealogy of St. Denis's particular brand of mysticism can be traced through American Transcendentalism to the Swedish mysticism of her parents' Englewood colony, to her explorations of Christian Science, and ultimately, Vedanta, the spiritual and philosophical background of Hinduism."^{xxiii}

The transmission of yoga to the U.S. has come from several sources from India to Europe and then to the U.S. Some of these sources have come through literature and texts, some through the performance of artists, through master mediation teachers, and some through media. Though the practice of yoga asana and meditation did not reach the U.S. until the late 19th century, both Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, early 19th century Transcendentalists represented philosophical schools of thought that are consistent with yoga. Transcendentalism

initially arose among New England Congregationalists in the 1830s and is rooted in a desire to ground philosophy in principles of inner spirituality rather than a physical experience and knowledge. The term Transcendentalism was associated with Asian Religions in particular Hindu texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita and was an American intellectual movement against 18th century rationalism.^{xxiv} In addition to assimilating philosophies from Asian Religions, Transcendentalism incorporated ideas from German Romanticism including those of Immanuel Kant^{xxv} who emphasized knowledge “which is concerned not with objects but with our mode of knowing objects.”^{xxvi} The Transcendentalist movement later contributed to Unitarianism, The Theosophical Society, the Vedanta Society, and New Thought movement.

Emerson and Thoreau’s modes of thinking are indebted in some ways to Vedic thought. Various Indian philosophies relate to and have different positions on Veda scriptures and texts. Emerson, the father of Transcendentalism, introduced Thoreau to Vedic literature. While there is limited evidence to suggest they were direct practitioners of yoga, their assimilation of Hindu philosophy prepared the landscape for American yoga.

As translations of various Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, laws of Manu become available in the Western world, Emerson eagerly digested them. He encountered the Bhagavad Gita in bits and pieces of translations and was tremendously struck by it. Thoreau, fourteen years but actually a generation younger than Emerson, was able to incorporate Vedic thought to a greater extent into his daily living; Thoreau experienced a number of epiphanies. These moments of unity with nature opened Thoreau's being to “a higher light” that permitted him to “escape” from himself and to “travel totally new paths.”^{xxvii}

As a highly regarded intellectual of his era, Emerson was steered towards reading Hindu texts by his family and incorporated this philosophy into his own writing. His father, Reverend William Emerson, a minister in the Unitarian church, encouraged his son to read these texts from his own personal library that included “several major works on India and its religious cultures.”^{xxviii} Yoga is connected to diverse world religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism through spiritual practices such as meditation. Emerson was also reading Rammohun Roy’s published translation of the Upanishads in English. Roy was a “Bengali of Brahmin caste”^{xxix} who argued that the Upanishads “espoused a gospel of monotheism”^{xxx} that would have made him attractive to the liberal Christians in New England of which Emerson’s father was a part in the 19th century. “He (Roy) also set up the first Unitarian Mission in Calcutta in 1821; this and his pamphlet “The Principals of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness” incited controversy amid India’s Trinitarians, which further endeared him to American Unitarians.”^{xxxi}

Emerson read Roy’s translation of the “Ishopanishad”^{xxxii} The understanding of “Brahmin” as a transcendent force is described in this text in the following way: “He pervades the internal and external parts of the whole universe; and he is ‘one unchangeable’ who seems to move everywhere although in reality he has no motion...he overspreads all creatures...he is pure, perfect, omniscient, the ruler of the intellect, omnipresent, and the self-existent.”^{xxxiii} Emerson absorbed and transmitted in some of his texts this Vedanta notion that the universe is not fragmented, but rather all separate parts reflect a difference that “mask the infinite, eternal, immutable soul of the universe.”^{xxxiv} Emerson also read Charles Wilkins’s translation of the Bhagavad-Gita, a text that is widely considered to be a yoga scripture and incorporated Hindu thoughts into his own writing as in the reference he makes in his poem “Brahma.” He writes, quoting the Katha Upanishad, “The word is Om. This sound means Brahma, the supreme.”^{xxxv} In

his Sanskrit glossary for his “Notebook Orientalist,” he defines the word “yoga” as “the effort to unite with the Deity. Concentration.”^{xxxvi}

Primarily comprised of Emerson’s contemporaries, the American Oriental Society was founded in 1842 and included clergy that were part of creating the conditions for bringing Hindu thinking – and yoga – into the U.S.^{xxxvii} The membership included Harvard alumni New England clergy and theologians who wrote articles for the Society’s journal. The American Oriental Society honored Emerson a month after his death. One of Emerson’s Harvard colleagues wrote that the Society “worked hard to promote the image of Emerson as a prototypical American intellectual, reassuring readers that his dear friend was Yankee at the core and his interest in the Orient purely aesthetic.”^{xxxviii} What this statement implies is that while the New England Christian idealism of this time might have been fascinated with elements of Hinduism, the possibility of embodying the spiritual practices was not widely embraced or considered socially acceptable. Arthur Christy’s “The Orient in American Transcendentalism” was written in 1932 and chronicled a chronology of Emerson’s reading of books from Asia and “marshaled enough evidence to counter any claim that Emerson had brought back only trinkets and cloud castles from his mental journeys to India”^{xxxix} indicating that Emerson’s interest in this topic was more than the curiosity the masking might imply.

While Emerson was a transcendentalist who seems to have primarily absorbed Hindu philosophy through intellectual pursuits, Henry Thoreau read these same texts as “instructional manuals.”^{xl} Yoga historian Stephanie Syman suggests that Thoreau then assimilated yoga through his practice of living in the woods, simplifying his diet and lifestyle, and meditation. Thoreau’s philosophy and texts are linked with Vedic thought. Unitarian minister Moncure Conway believed Thoreau was successful in doing so and he wrote “Thoreau was a Yogi, in part,

because he tried to be one.”^{xli} He perceived his experiences through the lens of Indian thought and yoga.^{xlii} While his knowledge came from books and his experience as yogi could be debatable, his life at Walden took a similar pathway to that of a yogic ascetic and his writing included elements of Indic literature. Most notably Thoreau focuses on the perspective of yoga on creativity and an attuning of the senses to his environment. Syman describes him as being an artist with a sensory awareness to his ecological environment.

To sanctify his labors with the broader public, Thoreau inserted a self portrait, disguised as a Hindu parable, into Walden. In his conclusion, he tells the story of the artist of Kouroo who possessed a rare and complete single-pointed concentration and set out to carve a perfect wooden staff. When he finished, eons had passed and he had, by his simple devotion to his task, made “the fairest of all the creations of Brahma. He had made a new system in making the staff.” Thoreau clearly means this to be yoga, which he later defined as “an exercise of penance and extreme devotion,” and in locating the artist in Kouroo, clearly connects this parable to the Gita...Thoreau’s yoga not only preserved individual genius, since the artist is never subsumed by Brahman, his yoga exalted it.^{xliii}

In this statement Syman calls attention to Thoreau as a yogi and artist and the need to associate a new “system” of mode of production with this practice.

Both Thoreau and Emerson’s immersion in Hindu and yogic spirituality was masked under the guise of intellectualism in a similar way that I think the early modern dancers in the 20th century who were also coming from liberal Christian families cloaked their interest in

spiritual practices from other traditions in their dance practices. The next section will focus on Genevieve Stebbins and Ruth St. Denis and their relationship to yoga.

Swami Vivekananda, Genevieve Stebbins, Ruth St. Denis, and American Delsartism: A Shift from Yoga Philosophy to Bodily Practice

The story and history of transformation for yoga and dance in the U.S. traces various pathways and proponents of yoga beginning with philosophers like Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson in the 1800s and the early purveyors of yoga such as Swami Vivekananda who gave presentations about Hinduism at The World Parliament of Religions as part of the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 in Chicago, Illinois. Defining the emergence of yoga in U.S. society is a complex undertaking because “American Society has been able to assimilate any number of versions of it, more or less simultaneously.”^{xliv}



Figure 3.1: Swami Vivekananda, World Parliament of Religions, 1894 ^{xliv}



Figure 3.2: World Parliament of Religions, 1894 ^{xlvi}

Swami Vivekananda was a key figure and Hindu monk from India who introduced Vedanta philosophies and yoga to the U.S. In 1893 he spoke at The World Parliament of Religions, an event designed to create interfaith dialogue among spiritual traditions from around the world.^{xlvi} Vivekananda lived in the U.S. for four years until 1897 during which time he conducted hundreds of lectures and public presentations disseminating the spiritual philosophies of Vedanta where he “emphasized both Vedanta philosophy and the practice of yoga, especially raja yoga, which he described as a ‘psychological way to union’ with the Divine.”^{xlviii} The Vedanta Society was founded by Vivekananda in 1894 in New York and introduced “bodily postures, breath-centered meditation, and the cultivation of concentration.”^{xlx} Liberal Christians were drawn to the Vedanta Society because of its focus on religious equality. Vivekananda brought a focus to “bodily posture” that expanded the U.S. philosophies of transcendentalism and a focus on inner awareness to include a connection between spiritual practice and the physical body. Vivekananda and the Vedanta Society shifted the transcendentalist idea of yoga philosophy to an actual yoga practice. Emphasis at the time of the late 1890s was not so much on

asana practice but rather on breath. Breath as being more than a philosophy, breath as being a bodily experience.



Figure 3.3: Swami Vivekananda and Female Supporters ¹

Supporters and followers of Vikenandanda were primarily comprised of white middle class protestant women.^{li} This group endorsed Vikenandanda as an “authoritative spiritual and political voice” as they also supported emerging modern dance artists like Maud Allen, Isadora Duncan, and Ruth St. Denis. The modern dance of this time was associated with “Asian inspired techniques such as Transcendentalism, Theosophy, modern Vedanta, and of course, yoga.”^{lii} In addition to Transcendental and Vedanta philosophies circulating on the east coast at the turn of the century, modern dance with an “orientalist” style was becoming popular in the way that Duncan, and St. Denis generalized and assimilated many Asian iconographic images and philosophies in the creation of their dances. Mark Singleton (2010) and Priya Srinivasan (2003) point out that while Duncan and St. Denis were generalizing and culturally appropriating dances from India, performers like Rukmini Devi and Uday Shankar^{liii} in India were incorporating many

of the inventions of their U.S. “interpreters” through a process of “ongoing exchange and translation.”^{liv}

In the article “Temple Stage as Historical Allegory in Bharatanatyam: Rukmini Devi as Dancer-historian,” Avanthi Meduri describes Indian Bharatnatyam dancer’s Rukumini Devi’s (founder of the Kalekshetra dance school in Chennai in 1936) relationship within “the transnational worldview of the Theosophical Society” during the 1930s.^{lv} Meduri does not generalize Devi as a Bharatanatyam dancer. She was a Brahmin woman who learned and reinvented a new style of Bharatanayam. Devi’s father’s was a Theosophist and she ultimately married George Sydney Arundale who was also a Theosophist. In the early 1920s she traveled the world with Arundale and she was made “President of Young Theosophists” in 1923.^{lvi} Devi was also locating the Bharatanatyam dance revival in a transcultural worldview. She was an editor for the *Young Theosophist* and *The Young Citizen* journals from 1930 – 50. Meduri suggests that in some of these documents Devi “described how she constituted her allegorical aesthetic and used her dance work to enable both goals of Indian nationalism and international Theosophy simultaneously.”^{lvii} Her writings were published in the Theosophical periodicals and included pamphlets about “Dance and Music” and “Yoga: Art or Science” discussing connections between Yoga, Dance, and Music.^{lviii} Devi talked about her dance philosophy in Hollywood, California in 1938^{lix} and it is possible local modern dancers might have attended this lecture or heard about the ideas thus in circulation in the California art community.

Uttara Asha Coorlawala also suggests that while St. Denis’s dances inspired by visions of India such as “Radha,” “The Yogi,” “The Cobras,” “The Incense,” “The Nautch,” and “The Lotus Pond,” were “unashamedly inauthentic” the dances do communicate “her absorption with Indian philosophical and devotional ethos.” Coorlawala suggests St. Denis “did serve and

propagate a positive image of Indian dance forms outside of India.” St. Denis’s Hindu inspired choreographies later inspired acclaimed European ballerina Anna Pavlova to incorporate these dances in her own concert programs in England including “Incense,” Nautch,” and a “Hindu Snake Dance” performed by a dancer named Roshanara. St. Denis’s Asian inspired choreographies preceded the collaboration between Pavlova and Uday Shankar by 17 years.^{lx} It was not until much later in the century that the Indian dancer Chandralekha became instrumental in fusing yoga with dance. Arguably her choreography was far more aware of yoga as a specific traditional element infusing the dance, yet it did not have a significant impact on the awareness of yoga in modern dance developments in the United States.



Figure 3.4: Ruth St. Denis^{lxi}, Rukmini Devi^{lxii}, Uday Shankar^{lxiii}

American hatha yoga practice was developed out of a transnational intermingling of the export of Indian and American Nationalism, European bodybuilding and women’s gymnastics in the early 20th century.^{lxiv} An instrumental teacher and proponent of the women’s gymnastics

movement was Genevieve Stebbins.^{lxv} In Europe, Stebbins was a student of the French artist Francois Delsarte who was famous for applying spirito-physical aesthetics to the dramatic expression of acting and movement. Stebbins was an author, movement practitioner and teacher of the Delsarte system of performance as well as Vedanta. Her work primarily took place in Boston and New York, where she lived and taught. Stebbins brought “yoga” and “harmonial gymnastics” to her interpretation of Delsartian techniques.^{lxvi} Stebbins was bringing a physical culture to middle and upper class women as a healthy way of exercising and living.^{lxvii}



Figure 3.5: Harmonial Gymnastics^{lxviii}

Stebbins also instructed St. Denis. St. Denis’s partner in the creation of the Denishawn school was Ted Shawn. Shawn wrote about Delsartian performance theories based on experience in the book *Every Little Movement: A Book About Francois Delsarte*. Delsartism has been widely compared with Hatha Yoga and Vivekananda himself asserted that “many of the practices of hatha yoga ‘such as placing the body in different postures’ are to be found in Delsarte.”^{lxix} Because St. Denis had Delsartian training with Stebbins and Shawn was actively involved in

documentation of Delsartian aesthetics, these relationships between yoga and Delsarte are significant because they plant the seed of the idea that yoga philosophies and movement postures are embedded in the early modern dance principles of motion.

Isadora Duncan is also linked to Delsarte training.^{lxx} Several books and articles about Isadora Duncan explore the early modern dance territory such as Daly's *Done Into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America*. I don't go into a great deal of explanation about Duncan because I couldn't make the physical connections to yoga in her movement. Duncan does appear to have a philosophical connection to yoga through Delsarte. Elizabeth Kendell describes how Duncan imbibed philosophy through her belief that "her mind and her body were inseparable"^{lxxi} and incorporated Delsarte techniques through "connections between heard rhythms and pantomimic gestures."^{lxxii} These statements allude to possible yogic thinking of the union of mind, body, and soul.

One of the practices emphasized both by Stebbins and Vivekananda, and also St. Denis in the development of her dance exercises, centered around the use of the breath. Stebbins's influential book *Dynamic Breathing and Harmonic Gymnastics. A Complete System of Psychological, Aesthetic, and Physical Culture* (1892) describes exercises involving calisthenics and breathing techniques in a spiritual context. Stebbins's Delsartean training included similar asana and posture work to contemporary hatha yoga classes incorporating relaxation and posture work.^{lxxiii} Vivekananda focused on breathing as a physical practice of yoga.

According to Nicolo Ruberto, a one-time follower of Vivekananda, one practiced yoga by sitting up straight and engaging in a series of breathing exercises. He explains this involves, 'closing the right nostril and inhaling through the left.' This process starts the

kundalini, which, according to this article, is ‘a residual energy’, ‘things of earth – you have to move the kundalini upward until it touches the brain.’ Practicing breathing exercises is the way to awaken this dormant energy and thus become a god.^{lxxiv}

In yoga, kundalini and the breath techniques of pranayama are intertwined. Kundalini is defined as a cosmic spiraling energy in every individual that exists at the base of the spine and through the practices of yoga travels upwards through the body and out and beyond the head through the shushmna. The Sanskrit word “kundal” means “spiral.” There are many references to Kundalini in Vedantic and Hindu sacred texts.^{lxxv}

Stebbins was teaching yoga breath exercises to women across the U.S. as part of her dance practice. She also developed a gesture pattern in her technique that involved spiraling curves and wave motions of the spine and body. While the spiral is an image in many diverse cultural and spiritual traditions, and Stebbins was also interested in expressive movement spirals in Greek art, she was aware of the connection to the idea of the spiraling kundalini energy as she inherited the base of her philosophies from Delsarte and Vedanta.^{lxxvi}

The intermingling of the spiraling kundalini energy and breath philosophy in early Vedanta practices with harmonial gymnastics is reflected in some of the principles of motion and performance aesthetics inherent in contemporary modern dance training. St. Denis was alive during the time that Stebbins was bringing together Delsarte and Vedanta breath practices. Suzanne Shelton in her autobiography of St. Denis also indicates that Ralph Waldo Emerson inspired St. Denis to embody concepts from Vedanta philosophy as Emerson “...used the spiral as a central metaphor for his thought, an emblem of the rising, never-ending chain of human aspiration for the divine. Genevieve Stebbins and, later, Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis used

the spiral form to create a modern dance expressive of ideal beauty. The spiral was inherently dynamic, inherently temporal. It was the type of modern dance.^{lxxvii} The image of spiraling kundalini influenced the development of St. Denis's movement vocabulary and technique. Martha Graham, one of St. Denis's students, developed a movement practice with floor exercises that comes from the pelvic core and spirals up the head and out toward the limbs.

A parallel idea about thinking through transnational influences of contact and acculturation between philosophies of kundalini and breath practices in yoga and early modern dance can be seen in the formation of Indian/English literature. Vinay Dharwadker^{lxxviii} in his article "Formations of Indian-English Literature" writes that when cultures practice "literary production in a language of foreign origin" three histories emerge. One is the "history of the particular modes of contact that link the foreign language and its native users," another is the "history of the new community's acquisition of literacy in the foreign language," and the third element is the "community's broad acculturation to the ways of life, thought, and expression represented by the foreign language."^{lxxix} In the postcolonial encounter, yoga could be conceived as a metaphor for a "foreign language" by thinking through the contact and effect of yoga literature and practices circulating in the U.S. had on the early development of modern dance. The effect yoga has had on the U.S. dance culture can be perceived in how the practice of breath and asana have shifted from a philosophy and meditation practice to include performativity in performance on stage, from the early St. Denis dance training in the early 1900s to the present in yoga in the U.S. Modern dance artists have a broad acculturation and multiplicity of ways that incorporate yoga into dance practice.

St. Denis was brought up in a Christian family. Her religious upbringing combined with her exposure to Transcendentalism is also reflected in the way St. Denis absorbed strands of

ideas from various cultures into her dance practice and points to a philosophy of understanding of holistic awareness that are assimilated in St. Denis's dance performance philosophy. She was influenced by this kind of circulation of ideas through Transcendentalism. This connects back to Dhwardkar's notions that the "history of the new community's acquisition of literacy," how a new idea broadens a community's "acculturation to the ways of life, thought, and expression," are represented by transnational flows of ideas. Thoreau and Emerson incorporated ideas about yoga philosophy into their writings.^{lxxx} While some of their writing reflects Orientalist exotica, according to Syman, Emerson and Thoreau could also be considered as trying to use "alternative epistemologies in order to counter the hegemonic discourses of their time. Thoreau was disillusioned with industrialism, imperialism, racism, slavery and all the oppressive institutions that were responsible for social injustice. He was looking for alternative ways of understanding the world and he found these in Hindu mythology and in the writings about Yogic practice and philosophy."^{lxxxi}

The embedding of yoga-in-dance appears to have existed for Ruth St. Denis as well and marked the curriculum in her dance school and the flow of ideas. One perspective is to view Thoreau, Emerson, and St. Denis as appropriating yoga. St. Denis might also be viewed as valuing a movement system she saw as appropriately communicating her own philosophy and Vedanta practice. What is signified by 'embedding' is the quiet inclusion of yoga in dance alongside dominant discourse in such a way as to ensure that yoga in dance practice is not restricted to disrupting discourse, but rather also enables a fruitful opening of practice alongside discourse, that offers alterior possibilities. This then has the potential for the active pursuit of thinking about yoga-in-dance to flow in many spaces and directions. Mark Singleton's work on postural yoga radically questions the origins of hatha yoga in the U.S. Singleton proposes that

yoga practice also has roots in body building traditions of Europe and gymnastics of Europe and the U.S. in the early 1900s. The blending of yoga, bodybuilding, and gymnastics made their way back to India and were influenced by interpretations of Hindu nationalism which then flowed back into an understanding of hatha yoga in the U.S.^{lxxxii} In this case it could also be viewed that the culture of postural yoga was at that time was also appropriating U.S. modern dance. Or, a continuation of dialogical exchange between cultures of bodily and movement practices.

St. Denis's spirituality emerged cloaked in commercial exoticism. This does not mean that it was any less sincere, however she started in vaudeville. In Ted's Shawn's biography of St. Denis^{lxxxiii} he mentions that she was active in vaudeville and she was brought up Christian. He expresses more than once that St. Denis struggled with puritanical ideals in the U.S. She had a vision that her dance school could be a place where dance and "spirituality" met. Because she was raised a liberal Christian this ideology more than likely formed her ideals and vision of what this might mean. Due to puritanical ideology, there was very little space at this time in U.S. society for dance to exist within the Christian realm, or, for other religions to have a presence in the lives of Christian women. Dancers like St. Denis were looking to give value to dance as an important art form because it was suspect historically. It makes sense that because of St. Denis's interest in and practice of Vedanta, she would have looked to yoga practices for inspiration. Such inspiration would recreate a model of how dance and spirituality might come together in a school, and then further embed these in a dance and performance techniques without directly pointing to the actual non-Christian spiritual or cultural practice. The curriculum of the Denishawn School eclectically drew from "ballroom, classical ballet and oriental dance, which were supported by movement classes, such as yoga and Delsarte gymnastics,"^{lxxxiv} an eclectic

mix which was later defined as the “Denishawn technique.”^{lxxxv} And, she was also drawing on these for her artistic philosophy.



Figure 3.6: Ruth St. Denis teaching at Denishawn “My First Yoga Class 1915”^{lxxxvi}

In St. Denis’s biography, there is a picture titled “My First Yoga class 1915”^{lxxxvii} that demonstrates her teaching a group in a dramatic seated lotus position, her left hand in what appears to be chin mudra on her lap, and her right hand extended wide. Mudras in yoga are divided into five categories including “hasta (“hand”), mana (“head”), kaya (“postural”), bandha (“lock”), and adbhara (“base or perineal”). Hand mudras have been used in Indian traditions in yoga practice, in ritual, in classical dance and drama, and in Ayurvedic medicine. Hand gestures “relate to the marmas and nadis, the energy points and currents in the physical and subtle bodies.”^{lxxxviii} In yoga and classical Indian dance, mudras serve as a focal point to direct the mind

and for healing. The word mudra in Sanskrit means “gesture” or “seal”.^{lxxxix} There is an archival video of St. Denis teaching a “yoga class” demonstrating mudras in the dance collection of the New York Library for Performing Arts at Lincoln Center in New York.^{xc} In that video she talks about how she invited Swami Paramananda in 1908 to talk with her students about yoga philosophy, and to teach them meditation. Swami Paramananda, an Indian Monk of the Ramakrishna order and disciple of Swami Vivekananda, came to the U.S. in 1906 to help the Vedanta Society in New York. In the same year, St. Denis choreographed “The Incense” where she performs puja, an act of worship in movement, presented at Hudson Theater, New York, 1906,^{xc} and then followed by “The Yogi,”^{xcii} “a pantomimic study of an Indian ascetic” that involved yoga exercises and asana, premiered in 1908 in Vienna. Ted Shawn describes “The Yogi” in his biography of St. Denis:

In the center of the forest is a clearing where the young Yogi has come to meditate; he has learned the postures of Yoga from his Guru, or spiritual teacher. These he performs; but there comes dissatisfaction with the old ritual, and he yearns and searches for peace everywhere. Finding none, he sinks into despair and dejection. Then from within comes the message, “I am Peace,” and slowly he rises into Samadhi, or the perfect consciousness.^{xciii}

St. Denis first met Swami Paramananda in Surrey, UK. He later founded a center for spirituality in Boston and California in the U.S. as well as being active in the Vedanta Society in New York where he published articles about “Vedic influences on Emerson.”^{xciv} Miss Ruth was also

involved in the New York Vedanta Society and according to Suzanne Shelton's autobiography of St. Denis, Paramananda wrote about her in his Vedanta Magazine "The Message of the East."^{xcv}

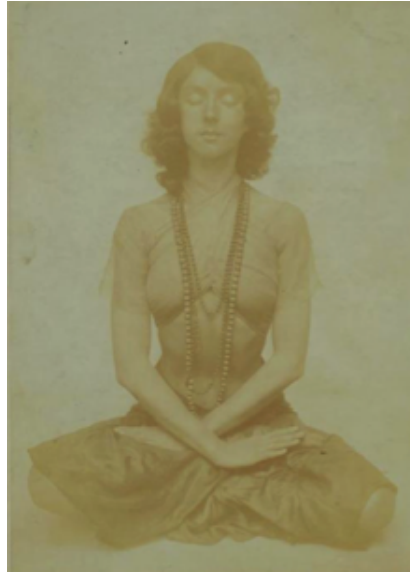


Figure 3.7: Ruth St. Denis "The Yogi" ^{xcvi}

Yoga, Dance, and Women's Rights in the 1920s and 30s

In the early 1920s and 30s, yoga gave women in the U.S. a bodily experience of public visibility through physical exercises through the practice of breath exercises and postures in a time when women's rights were just emerging. What is paradoxical is that a choreographer like St. Denis was blending a vision of progressive liberalism as a modern day woman by performing as a soloist, establishing schools, and directing a dance company while still enmeshed in a male dominated culture, while as a group, women were still lacking in education, political, and economic power. The dancing female body in St. Denis's choreography was objectifying sexuality and exoticism and objectified simultaneously. Perhaps the practice of yogic breath and posture in movement practice was a subtle way to lay claim to the body, to being at peace within being strong rather than that era's vision of beauty and woman as sexualized, compliant, and pretty. While on the visible surface level a woman might not admit to including a physical practice of yoga in her art form because of what was deemed acceptable by society, economic art forms, and male paying audience, St. Denis might incorporate the breathing practices into her art form but not name it specifically. Thus hiding the original impulse.

Part of the interest in a focus on women's fitness also grew out of perspectives of women in early settler conditions and thinking. In Elizabeth Kendall's words, "The vigorous and widespread public discussion in the late nineteenth century of women's fitness camouflaged the deeper question of what women were fit for: wifhood and motherhood alone, or some sort of personal happiness."^{xvii} Kendall further proposes that settler mentality of this time caused women to fear that ill health were the results of individual pleasure. "In one sense, American modern dance emerged from these late nineteenth century women's anxious idea of their

physical selves: their supposed condition of chronic disease was the background; the search for renewed health was the impetus.”^{xcviii}



Figure 3.8: Popular Yoga Gymnastics in magazines of 1930s^{xcix}

Yoga, as it seems to be presented through Vedanta in the early 1900s in literature and films, was offering the idea of “total freedom” and mastery over the senses. Vedanta yoga leads to Samadhi, and Samadhi in yoga is defined as union, or liberation. The notion of kundalini and

the breath leading to Samadhi for dancing women in the 1920s and 1930s was a way for artists to grasp and claim the liberation of the female body. St. Denis may have subtly claimed the idea of freedom and incorporated yogic practices of breath and posture into the “new dance” without naming it because of the surrounding society with its critical male dominated press. Ted Shawn writes about how many of St. Denis’s early producers and critics were men and that she struggled for visibility. He says that to be a successful female dancer in the U.S. during this time period, the performer either had to be an acrobat walking a tightrope high in the sky so that all could see her, or, she needed to take off all her clothes. In order to be accomplished in the society and time she lived in, she needed to be sensational. The widening of sexual freedom of the 1930s led to a lot of sexy dance costumes as can be seen in Busby Berkeley’s films, and in St. Denis exotic dress wear. While St. Denis may have been pushing the edge for women’s bodily presence in society, she was still performing in a male dominated culture. The movement of the body is at the same time a liberating force presenting yoga as a possible way for women to move beyond the male gaze and a restricting one.

Incorporating yoga in early modern dance was a subversive tactic by St. Denis to perhaps not so much create an original American art form but rather to originate an authentic experience of womanhood for dancers of her time. In the early 20th century, definitions of beauty for women were focused on sexual attractiveness and outward appearances. “For the first two decades of the 20th century, many of the attitudes towards beauty associated with the 19th century remained. In Victorian society, it was considered a woman's duty to make herself beautiful. In the early 20th century, this was coupled with the idea of ‘self-presentation’ as enjoyable, expressive and creative.”^c Yoga offered an inward glance to women. The focus of yogic practices included drawing the breath inward and meditating on Kundalini energy within

the body. This was in stark contrast to the early 20th century focus on cosmetic beauty and how popular fashion defined what it meant to be a modern woman. St. Denis's interaction with yoga practitioners was in a way a rebellious protofeminist stance against the ideals of a male dominated society. Womanhood as defined by outward appearance was countered by a dance practice that incorporated ideals of focusing the mind and body inward.

Denishawn, the school that St. Denis and Ted Shawn founded, trained Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, and Charles Weidman. Yoga philosophy and breathing techniques were embodied in Denishawn training. Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey were students of Ruth St. Denis before going on to form their own companies. Humphrey developed a movement style based on breath. "Like Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey was interested in the fundamental importance of tension and relaxation in the body, and used it as the foundation of her own system of movement principles. She called her version of the contraction and release of muscles and of the breath cycle 'fall and recovery.'"^{ci}

Martha Graham incorporated specific breathing techniques and a dance technique based on the spiral. She was also an advocate for freedom for women. In her autobiography *Blood Memory*, Graham talks about how she wanted her young female students to seek a powerful voice. "Many came to me with conventional notions of prettiness and graceful posturing. I wanted them to admire strength."^{cii} Interestingly she also imagines kundalini as a weapon for women. "The chakras awake the centers of energy in the body, as in kundalini yoga. The awakening starts in the feet and goes up. Through the torso, the neck, up, up, through the head, all the while releasing energy. I've used this too, in a very naughty way, to defeat a man who bored me."^{ciii} While this statement points to a non-spiritual pursuit and understanding of

kundalini energy, it does reveal how yogic thinking empowered women to view their bodies as a dynamic and vigorous presence.

The Effect of Representations of Yoga in Photography and Film Culture in Popular Women's Magazines and Film Shorts

In the 1930s a number of articles in the popular women's magazine "Health and Strength" (H&S) focused on postural images that are strikingly similar to yoga asana exercises that might be found in hatha yoga training today. These images served as a kind of how to stretch manual for women without being directly called yoga. Mark Singleton in his book *The Yoga Body* points to Bertram Ash's 1934 H&S feature "Mainly for the Ladies" including an article titled "Building the Body Beautiful: S-T-R-E-T-C-H Your Way to Figure Perfection" as a kind of training for women to attain a "pleasing physique."^{civ} Singleton goes on to suggest that there is a gender differentiation between men and women's physical culture represented in this kind of magazine where the men are represented as doing acrobatics and strength building exercises and women are performing gestures that are primarily concerned with stretching and graceful movements.^{cv} Hatha yoga includes a series of asanas, or postures, that are positions held over duration of time. Graham developed active positions in her floor technique. The similarities to Graham's postural placement and yoga asanas is strikingly similar and it is likely that she would have been aware of these exercise manuals and images in circulation at the time she was developing her dance technique vocabulary.

Throughout their careers, St. Denis and Graham were also teaching and creating work when yoga films were circulating around the country. The representation of yoga through photography and film rapidly brought postural yoga into the public eye in the 1930s. Mass

produced and globally circulated images of physical culture from India brought yoga to international attention in a similar way that philosophical ideas in literature circulated in print technology in the 1800s. In social media, postural yoga was popularized through magazines and traveling newsreels such as the 1938 McPetruk film showing B.K.S. Iyengar and Krishnamacharya performing asana.^{cvi} While I have not come across any direct research that indicates St. Denis or Graham saw any of these works, it is likely that because they were living and teaching in cities like New York and Los Angeles, these artists would have possibly seen these or been aware of the circulation of the images. Also, while Duncan and St. Denis talk about organic movement, they are situated in a time when photography and film were going to dance as a primary source for their storytelling.^{cvi} Felicia McCarren's book *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* focuses on the rhetoric of modern dance in relation to the culture of machines in the early 1900s, and her analysis allows me to make a loose link here to the fact that a machine culture in film was also part of the social conditions that modern dance developed in.



Figure 3.9: Newsreel Yoga Film Still 1938 ^{cvi}

Both St. Denis and Graham were attracted to film as a medium to explore their choreography. Silent films were a natural connection to dance because words were not needed to tell an expressive story through moving bodies and images on screen. From early on in her career St. Denis interacted with this medium and she first choreographed for a major film in 1916 called “Intolerance” directed by D.W. Griffith.^{cix} Many of her dances are documented for the camera.

There is also a difference at the bodily level between the photographs and film clips of Isadora Duncan and St. Denis. While Duncan does dance some on the floor, there is a larger move from Duncan’s flowing vertical movement influenced by ballet to St. Denis’s work with full body weight on the ground. One of the primary differences I see is the use of the floor. St. Denis performs floorwork in photographs, film clips, and audio tapes of her teaching dance and in her choreography. The links to harmonial gymnastics and Indian asana films circulating in the U.S. as well as artists teaching postural yoga and sitting meditation at Denishawn, may be part of the reason the dancing body in modern dance began moving on the floor with the full body and not only the feet. Martha Graham furthered the use of the floor through her development of a Graham based floorwork technique.

An enthusiasm for Indian devotional tales can also be read in Martha Graham’s choreography of the 1926 Eastman Kodak company’s seven minute experimental color film “The Flutes of Krishna.”^{cx} Graham choreographed this on her students Robert Ross, Evelyn Sabin, Thelma Biracree, Constance Finkel, and Betty MacDonald while she was teaching at the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester.

Graham’s creation for the Eastman Kodak studios was a dance about Radha. This took on a similar theme to St. Denis’s Radha choreography. Radha was a dance that St. Denis had widely publicized throughout her career and Graham’s reference to this theme demonstrates a

connection between her and her teacher. The film was created as “test material for a new color-film process.”^{cx1} In this film Graham’s dance draws from Hindu mythology and focuses on the interplay of movement dialogue between a dancing Krishna and his lover Radha along with what appear to be several gopis. Her choreography is mostly pantomime and the performers are wearing sari inspired pantaloons, dresses, and flowing material. The music score includes tabla, flute, and sarod instruments. The choreography is pre-Graham dance technique and tends towards a free flowing upper body moving circularly with fabrics and foot patterns that reflect baroque dance styles. This film gestures towards Graham’s connection and interest in Hindu mythologies and awareness of media. Her interaction and knowledge of film indicates she may have been knowledgeable of yoga films in circulating in the 1930s and that these visual representations may have also contributed to the inspiration for the development of Graham technique and practice.

The interaction of yoga, media, and modern dance in the 1920s and 1930s caused a weight bearing shift between practices as they worked alongside one another. This weight bearing shift occurred between individuals who taught together, listened to one another’s lectures, and in the circulation of ideas in print and film. Just enough dialogue was happening about yoga in and around modern dance communities and practitioners to have an effect and cause a change in creative process, the development of technique, and idea-making around artistic philosophies. As noted above, dancers like Genevieve Stebbins and Ruth St. Denis were incorporating yoga in to their dance styles as a result of working with artists and spiritual organizations like the Vedanata society.

In dance, if you shift your core weight enough off your center of gravity, the body will naturally topple over. However if you inject a certain amount of energy and tension into the

gesture, you will not fall off center (unless intentionally) and instead move into another space. If these dancers identified yoga-in-dance at this time the work might have been rejected entirely due to a dominant Christian culture and a male dominated press in the U.S. that restricted the visibility of women's rights. The circulation of ideas around yoga and bodies of knowledge in dance and yoga partnered in the same space (of the U.S.) around the same time. This circulation of flow was "felt" by the different traditions and the vibration of the yogic movement had an impact on the development of modern dance.

What changes from the mid-1800s Transcendental era to the early 1900s is a shift in imagining yoga as philosophy into realizing it as a physical practice. Yoga is something that is not only thought about, but also a practice physicalized in the body. Enough movement energy was visualized and practiced by artists like Stebbins and St. Denis to cause a shift in understanding and change in practices among these few individuals who later inspired a generation of dancers for decades to come. The Transcendentalist philosophies, Delsartian exercises, and Denishawn movement and performance principles were imparted and continued in the teaching practices of artists like Graham, Humphrey, and Weidman. These artists went on to develop expressive techniques that were taught in emerging modern dance programs in physical education departments in universities across the country in the 1920s and 30s as well as at the Bennington Summer School at Bennington College in Vermont (from 1934 to 1942). Many modern dance practices today trace back to this early embodiment of dance and yoga.

CHAPTER FOUR

REINVENTION, TRANSFORMATION, AND PHYSICAL CULTURE: THE CROSSROADS OF TRAINING IN DANCE AND YOGA PRACTICES

This chapter focuses on different ways of being and knowing in yoga in dance training and performance and is written with the contemporary modern dancer, choreographer, and dance educator in mind. The text provides context around how yoga is being incorporated into dance studio and creative practices today including: examples of hybrid training in the 1960s through the 90s, an overview of ways in which cross training in yoga and dance is currently happening in dance studios and how this is represented in dance magazines and digital media, the effects of commodification in yoga dance products and popular culture, conversations with artists Uttara Asha Coorlawala and Loretta Livingston, reflections of personal teaching strategies employed in dance classes and observations at a regional American College Dance Festival Association conference in California in 2012, a discussion of yoga-in-dance choreographies of Savion Glover, Phillip Askew and Lydia Walker, Navtej Johar, the Rudrukrakya Foundation Institute, and a response to perspectives in educational environments and performance practice.

This research focuses on a process oriented approach to dance teaching and making where tradition or authenticity could be understood from situated perspectives. In many ways the relationships I formed in conversation with artists, dance choreographies, and texts about training practices are continuing to re-form and shape me. The text examines ethical approaches to institutionalized cultural bias in dance department structures in colleges and universities in the U.S. and suggestions for structural change. It also moves toward a research paradigm that recognizes the insights and consciousness of experience in creative process. Exploring dance

heritage as a fluid process that shifts over time gives value to recognizing that each person and dance community has a different relation to dance heritage. Valuing that each practitioner experiences and receives information differently due to diverse individual encounters and preferences creates agency for the past and present inheritance of yoga in modern dance knowledge to be together simultaneously in choreography, performances and training.

Dance Memories

Until my first formal dance history class in college, dance memories had been passed on to me in the studio through oral story sharing and kinesthetic knowledge through dancing. I recall attending a summer dance intensive in 1988 in New York at the Erick Hawkins Dance Studio in Manhattan. I was 17 and living in Hoboken, N.J. for the summer with family friends. Each day I would cross the Hudson River on the Path train and take class with the Hawkins's company members. Erick was there at the studio but he had recently had a stroke so was not actually instructing the classes. In the evenings, we would sit on the studio floor with Erick and composer Lucia Dlugoszewski as they read poetry and talked about the philosophies that inspired their dance making practices. It was a very hot and sticky July in New York City. There was no air conditioning but I sat rapt in attention at their feet hungry to soak up new ideas. While Hawkins was primarily influenced by Japanese aesthetics and Zen thinking^{cxii} I remember conversations in the Hawkins studio that centered around how Yoga, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Daoism, major spiritual practices or religions of Asia, shared commonalities and differences around ideas of personal effort and action to transform one's body and mind. It is this memory that I started to meditate on as I began to think about how yoga and other movement practices emerging from Asia have influenced training the dancer's body.

In the Hawkins studio, I began to learn how various strands of some dance practices, traditions, and philosophy that had been incorporated into diverse dance and movement styles were having a conversation with one another. This history was also communicated via oral storytelling in the context of the dance classes or in choreography and improvisation sessions. What I did not see however was a similar acknowledgement of this plurality in the dance history texts that I later read as an undergraduate student. There was a divide between the knowledge taught to me in the dance studio and what I read in books.

In the Studio: Training the Dancer's Body – 1960s and 70s

Artists in the modern and postmodern dance scene in the U.S. experienced a visible explosion of interchange in East Asian and South Asian philosophies and movement practices in the 1960s and 70s. This occurred especially with artists like Merce Cunningham who practiced yoga and martial arts, Erick Hawkins who incorporated Buddhist philosophy, and the field of contact improvisation, which utilized tai chi and yoga. This period was a time when newly understood concepts about kinesiology and dance technique were creating a foundation for what would later be called somatics. Somatics in dance encompasses embodied ways of being and perceiving through the neuromuscular system of the body. In popular culture the 1960s was also a time when the Beatles visited Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in India; hippies and inquisitive college students and professors were traveling to India, China, and Japan and were being exposed to various forms of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Travel was beginning to be more easily available and accessible.

An example of this globalization and interchange in philosophy and movement practices through print media can be found in how Merce Cunningham was a self-taught yoga practitioner

who initially learned yoga through books. “Cunningham’s codified warm-up can be seen as influenced by asanas, which articulate every part of the body. His choreography includes complex, asymmetrical balances, which bear relationship to yoga standing poses.”^{cxiii} John Cage tells the following story of Cunningham’s yoga practice in 1970,

Every morning Merce Cunningham does his yoga. He is self-taught by means of books he collected on the subject. Aware of the intimate connection of body and mind, and not having a yogi’s assistance, he proceeds with caution. Once, while breathing deeply in the lotus position, he noticed that an unfamiliar force seemed to be rising up his spine. He changed his mind and very shortly was standing on his feet. ^{cxiv}

Sharing this story creates a link to the connectivity of yoga through print media to Martha Graham. Laura Straus suggests that Cunningham began practicing yoga after an injury performing with Graham. As one of Graham’s dancers, Graham might have suggested that Cunningham read these books for recovery purposes. In which case Graham then would have also been very aware of these manuals and was possibly incorporating asana and philosophies into her own technique. Priya Srinivasan points to Graham’s biographer Agnes DeMille who suggests that yoga was a foundation for Graham’s “modern dance constructions.”^{cxv} Her floor technique bears resemblance to yoga sitting poses. Both Graham and Cunningham technique influenced generations of dancers. Throughout this chapter more references will be made to links to Graham’s relationship with asana and yoga philosophy.

In many ways, yoga was “masked” in the way modern dance and yoga came together. In *Sweating Sari’s: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* Srinivasan examines modernity in the

U.S. in the “transformation of Oriental Dance into Modern Dance” in the mid-20th century.^{cxvi} She proposes that “oriental discourse continued to invoke its presence”^{cxvii} in the rhetoric of modern dance after exchanges between dancers. Srinivasan argues that “American dance had already swallowed the artistic practices of other cultures, including Native American and African American (Shea Murphy 2007; Manning 2006; Kraut 2008) and the rhetoric of modern dance masks this fact.”^{cxviii} What early modern dancers such as Ruth St. Denis and Martha Graham did was to enact their own voices by silencing the voices of Indian yoga practitioners who had inequitable power relations in the early to mid-1900s. Historically yoga worked alongside or became embedded in early modern dance sometimes with but most often without the acknowledgement of pluralism or hybridity. The influences of many cultures and artists have been invisibilized in the grand narrative and mythology of modern dance. Issues of colonialism and racism have had a traumatic effect on the rhetoric and discourses of some histories.

While instances of unacknowledged influence and appropriation of Asian movement practices in the development of early modern dance have been written about, my own experience is that also, and sometimes, other cultural bodies of knowledge and communities who hold a body of knowledge do not want to be publicly visible or acknowledged. They prefer to remain unidentified for many reasons which may include a need for protection from commodification, to avoid misrepresentation, or as a strategy of resistance to adaptation to a mainstream secular frameworks or particular religious dominant discourses. U.S. based contemporary dancers who have a yoga meditation practice for example may then have many decades of relation to a yoga philosophy with indigenous teachers of a movement style that influences their own spiritual practice and artistic craft, but not publicly acknowledge this not because of appropriation, but out of honoring the heritage. The embedding of yoga in dance may be part of an artist’s life practice

that influences how they approach their creative process, but also becomes only subtly visible out of respect for the transmitting cultural carrier. This can enable the preservation of a yoga heritage while simultaneously creating space for the hybridity and fruitful dissemination of new forms to emerge. The intertwining of diverse spiritual, cultural, and performance practices is a personal narrative for each artist in how yoga is being incorporated into dance today that is unique to their own life journey and relationship to the understanding of geography, ancestry, family upbringing, and movement training. What I value about this thinking is the creation of a space for a multiplicity of ways to understand the presence of yoga-in-dance simultaneously through situated perspectives. My position on where I stand on making something visible again is one of multiplicity. To acknowledge a stance of multiplicity is not a weak position. Rather it recognizes, honors, and respects that as human beings we have different ways of being in this world.

I think that there is much in the practice of yoga-in-dance that is not said or has not yet been said, and aspects that are said but may not be heard. Donna Haraway's notion of situated knowledge makes an argument for "politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims."^{cxix} In this view there is a relationship between bodies, knowledge, objects, and meanings. Situated knowledge recognizes positionality as critical to the concept of the relationship between the artist/researcher and the meaning making process, as critical. Making meaning of yoga-in-dance then comes from a situated position. Feminists like Haraway also make a move away from only thinking in the paradigms of binaries. The creative process then, and thinking through difference, can mean many things at once. Hearing the said in written form

or inscribed in movement then may be dependent upon how one is situated to understand layers of meaning.

Lynette Hunter, in the introduction to her book “Disunified Aesthetics: Situated Textuality, Performativity, Collaboration” proposes looking at situated textualities based on “processual” relationships to performativity.

The marker of the situated occurs as the rehearsal moves to performance, as alongside (or tangential) moves towards fit. A situated aesthetics maintains an interaction between the two so that the unsaid that has been made in the process of rehearsal, renders new contexts, new ecologies, a new situatedness that renders further recognitions of the making of difference. Situated aesthetics insists on a rhetoric of rehearsal continuously engaged with rhetorics of performance. It creates a constant sense of ‘until’, that one has said what needs to be said only until one knows there is something more to be said. ^{cxx}

A situated perspective is something I know in physical terms. The situated is site-particular. ^{cxxi} A lot of my improvisational and choreographic interests are in site particular dance. About ninety-five percent of my artistic work over the past twenty five years has been in locations other than a proscenium black box theater. Every place I have danced in has a completely different feeling and flow. The situated is what is apprehended through my senses and my relationship to this awareness. When I dance and look across a space to another moving body, element of nature, or architectural object, I only see a portion of the three dimensional curves of another’s limbs. A torso as it slowly rotates reveals itself in its own time, the refraction of sunlight on a leaf is particularly different in any given moment, or the perspective of surface

or horizon of a building depends upon where I am standing. And in terms of my own positionality, what is seen, heard, tasted, touched, and felt in my field of awareness informs me of when to be still and when to move. The constant rehearsal is the approach to the unknown. There are multiple possibilities to pass through. The “until” is a moment of actualization in the performance, of shifting into or stepping towards a new perspective and becoming present with an understanding, and immediately becoming. In movement improvisation, sometimes I stay quietly with a held posture for an extended period of duration, while other times I fluidly pass through, a process of receptivity, gathering, giving, and letting go.

In the undercurrent of the contemporary modern dance classroom and performance today, yoga textualities are incorporated into practice and performance. This presence provides situated knowledges and particular perspectives that communicate a past history and present experience of both place and displacement at the same time through a multiplicity of textualities. In the creative process of flow, the circumstances under which threads of yoga practice have become blended into modern dance generates a need for understanding difference between past and present aesthetic issues of representation.

In practical terms, today the incorporation of yoga-in-modern dance is even more exaggerated in the dancers training regime and conditioning. As dancers cross train today with yoga for exercise and conditioning purposes, they are incorporating yoga postures into their own teaching of dance technique classes and choreography. How can dancers can be responsible for the particularities of yoga history? Hatha yoga as a physical discipline is a preparation for a deeper spiritual experience and understanding of the soul. What is happening in these settings is that yoga is becoming a catch phrase for everything. As yoga postural practice is woven into modern dance warm-ups and classroom technique vocabulary, it often becomes secularized as a

body discipline only. If the spiritual context of yoga is stripped away from dance, does yoga-in-dance become a new genre that carries a different meaning from a yoga spiritual heritage?

What follows in the next section are references to contemporary popular culture views of yoga in dance. I reference several dance magazines, dance schools, and dance company websites because I believe they provide a pulse for how asana yoga is currently influencing the teaching, choreographic and performance aesthetics of dance students, teachers, choreographers, and professionals. Dancers today do hatha yoga for many reasons. For some it is injury prevention. It is not aerobic workout but is a good way to tone, strengthen, stretch and warm up as a way to prepare for a performance. Yoga is promoted in the dance world as a way to increase awareness of breath, create muscular balance, provide excellent cross training and improve flexibility.

Hatha Yoga Styles

Some dance teachers who incorporate hatha yoga into their dance technique are certified in one form or another and others are simply avid practitioners who utilize yoga concepts in warm-ups or choreography. At the same time, one way that dancers generate income is to teach yoga. Yoga classes are popular in fitness studios and have the potential to create a more solid income base due to the number of students who wish to exercise versus a small number of more serious dancers students. In general I have observed that dancers who make their living from teaching dance and from teaching yoga are certified in a form of yoga. The teaching of yoga and dance movement practices begins to cross between disciplines in terms of vocabulary and principle of motion in the classroom setting.

There are several different systems, styles, and brands popular practices of hatha yoga in the U.S. including Iyengar, Bikram, Anusara, and Ashtanga to name a few. Hatha Yoga is a

general term that brings together asana/postural exercises with pranayama/breathing exercises. Vinyasa is also a common term used to describe a flow class that moves between a series of postures utilizing the breath. While all share similarities, there are specifics about the training that make each one different. Most require intensive certifications in order to teach. For example Iyengar yoga, founded by the teacher B.K.S. Iyengar, involves a minimum of at least 3 years of training with an Iyengar mentor and 14 levels of certification.^{cxxii} Iyengar yoga tends to focus on “precise musculoskeletal alignment within each asana.”^{cxxiii} Anusara yoga, originally founded by John Friend is a new style that encourages flow. Anusara means “following your heart.”^{cxxiv} Ashtanga yoga came to the U.S. through Sri K. Pattabhi Jois and tends toward non-stop sequences and series of asanas.

The repetitive nature of asana practice may be part of what attracts dancers to hatha yoga. To build a dancer’s body, focus on repeating daily movement exercises is critical to muscular development and toning.^{cxxv} In asana practice, postures and breath practice are repeated in flow phrases. In Solveig Santillano’s M.A. thesis “The Effects of Hatha Yoga on Contemporary Dance: Pitfalls, Practices, and Possibilities,” Santillano proposes that repetition is a practical key to steadiness.

Interestingly, the system of breathing is one of the few body systems that operate on both an unconscious and conscious level. Additionally, it is possible to note the correlation of breath to state of mind by paying attention to the texture of breath when in an agitated state of mind. For example, when fighting back tears of sorrow the breath comes in short, interrupted, and ragged gasps, whereas in a state of anger the breath can be repressed and bound. When deeply upset, we often have to remind ourselves to take a deep breath; we

breathe in order to steady our mind. Iyengar describes this relationship of the breath to the mind, and their reflective nature: When the breath is irregular, the mind wavers; when the breath is steady, so is the mind. To attain steadiness, the yogi should restrain his breath.^{cxxvi}

There are very specific yoga techniques for how to breathe in coordination with bodily movement. Practical exercises such as pranayama help to focus the mind and concentration.

Asana yoga practice has traditionally been understood as being about more than just a series of poses. James Murphy, a former member of Nikolais Dance Theater dancer and the director of Iyengar Yoga Association of Greater New York believes that yoga helps dancers with stress through breathing techniques and a mind-body approach. Murphy believes that the asanas “are the beginning. A way to start to look at and understand your self, a way to develop and discover who you are.”^{cxxvii} What follows in the next section are examples of dance and yoga practitioners who recommend yoga as a popular training technique for dance.

Whitecloud Studio, Gyrotonics, and Yoga for Dancers – 1980s and 1990s

One of my early memories of being introduced to a form of yoga as an underlying principle of movement and exercise was in the late 1980s and early 90s in New York at the White Cloud Studio on West 72th street off of Broadway. A lot of dancers were training there as a supplement to their dance classes and to build a movement based practice that stretches and tones a dancer’s body to last a long time without serious injury. Armgard Von Bardeleben, a former dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company and former director of the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance, had suggested I go to White Cloud because this

training would physically complement the Graham training I was receiving at Juilliard. The basis of what was being taught at White Cloud was the foundation for what is now called “The Gyrotonic Expansion System”^{cxviii} founded by Juliu Horvath, a former ballet dancer with the Romanian State Opera, swimmer, and gymnast.^{cxix} This system includes Gyrokinesis and Gyrotonics and is promoted as a “holistic approach to movement.”^{cx} Gyrotonics involves a series of exercises that combines Pilates, swimming, yoga, and movement on equipment. Gyrokinesis sequences occur freeform on a mat and chair. Gyrokinesis was also originally called Yoga for Dancers and is still taught as “part of the Gyrokinesis Level 2 Program.”^{cxxi} When Horvath opened his own studio in 1984, he was also teaching Yoga for Dancers at Steps, a popular dance school in New York City. Horvath’s original students were primarily professional dancers. He changed the class name to Gyrokinesis in order to refine and brand the technique to reach a larger clientele. Horvath’s New York White Cloud studio closed in 1999 and he now travels offering trainings and workshops. There are Gyrotonic studios around the world.

Cross-Training in Yoga and Dance Today: Representation in Popular Dance Magazines and Digital Media

Popular press and media examples of how yoga is intertwined in training the dancer’s body can be found in recent issues of popular dance magazines such as *Dance Teacher* and course descriptions found online in world renown dance companies and training centers. In January 2008, *Dance Magazine* featured an article “Why They Love Yoga: 5 Dancers’ Favorite Positions” by Shayna Samuels, founder of the Mothership Yoga Lounge in Truth or Consequences, N.M.^{cxviii} Five dancers from various contemporary companies and shows including the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Aspen

Santa Fe Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, and the Broadway revival of Chorus Line all shared their favorite yoga insights and postures. These favorite asanas included: sirsana (headstand), parivrtta parsvakonasana (twisted side angle, with upper body twisting), padmasana (lotus), kapotasana (pigeon pose).

The way the article is written actually highlights what these dancers value about yoga philosophy more than the actual technique of the posture. For example each dancer expresses the values and virtues of how doing a posture informs their understanding of performance and daily life. Themes like “Finding Your Center,” “The Gift of Time,” “Appreciating Perfection,” and “An Unexpected Energy” are the title lines introducing each artist’s perspective. One performer shared that yoga “centers” her and helps her be less judgemental about herself as a performer. Another discussed how through how understanding the internal connection between breath and movement, he was able to not only “stretch by elongating” but also experience less daily tension and worry.



Figure 4.1: *Dance Magazine* 2008 ^{cxxxiii}

In the online Pressroom of The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater website there are a variety of links to announcements about new yoga classes taught at the Ailey School as well as pdf's of informative articles about yoga and dance in media. These links seem to be comprised of how yoga can be of value to a dancer's training. The Ailey extension program offers classes in yoga that are promoted as a course offering series called "Building the Dancer's Body."^{cxxxiv} The Alvin Ailey professional school and extension program offers a variety of yoga based dance programs that are part of body conditioning and stretch series. These include Tapas Yoga, Outdoor Ashtanga Yoga, Morning Yoga, Energy Harvest Yoga, and Afro Flow Yoga. The Afro Flow Yoga, created by instructors Leslie Salmon Jones and Pilin Anice "infuses electrifying dance movements of the African diaspora flowing with a meditative yoga sequence of gentle powerful stretches."^{cxxxv}

Ailey Yoga instructor Porschia Coleman and hip-hop’s Russell Simmons have joined together to create “Tapas Yoga,” a jivamukti style with a mix of “hip-hop, R&B and traditional yoga melodies that serve as the backdrop for breathtaking aerobic movements, challenging poses, and ohms.”^{cxv} This article exemplifies how yoga in dance can be a tool for performativity. The classes are taught at the Joan Weill Center for Dance through the Alvin Ailey extension program. The title of this style “Tapas” means “self discipline” or to “burn” in the Jivamukti practice. Coleman says her emphasis is on the concept of yoga as a “daily practice” and that it is not a “competition.” Featured are Coleman and Simmons demonstrating the Tri-pod headstand, side plank with adjustment, upward facing dog, and left hamstring stretch with descriptions of how to do the postures and benefits. For Simmons, the fruits of doing yoga are “the imminent benefits of single-pointed focus by harnessing the power of stillness.”^{cxvii} The performativity of yoga implied in this statement are the ideas that non-judgement and a state of quiet in movement are values in dance practices.



Figure 4.2: Alvin Ailey Instructors in *Ebony Magazine* ^{cxviii}

For *Dance Teacher* magazine, the incorporation of yoga in a technique class is about an integration of practices in movement. Various recent articles on yoga in dance suggests that what happens in the classroom through breathing and postural alignment can also be supportive of a dancers daily life outside of studio training. In August 2013 *Dance Teacher* featured “Yoga and Dance: TaraMarie Perri makes the connection” on the front cover of the magazine. Perri is an adjunct professor at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts who designed a “Mind Body Method” (MBD) dance class, described as a “dancer friendly yoga method” that has been taught at Steps on Broadway, Dance New Amsterdam, and the Mark Morris Dance Center in New York, including yoga postures with dancers in mind. The class is described as having a “vinyasa flow.” Since her training was in both dance and yoga, her goal was to connect these practices through what were the key elements that she believes are present in both including “alignment, breath, meditation.”^{cxviii} MBD yoga dance is also taught by some of her students at Steps on Broadway, a popular dance training center in NY, and at the Ridgefield Conservatory of Dance in Connecticut. The article includes a picture of the Mind Body Dancer yoga technique that recommends five yoga postures incorporated in her dance classes with brief descriptions of how these asanas strengthen the dancer’s body. These images include a female dancer on a yoga mat performing Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog), Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward Facing Dog), and Viparita Karani (Legs-Up-the-Wall Restorative Pose).^{cxli} Utilized in warm-ups, the uniting element of all these postures is breath. MBD suggests “While practicing, be sure to inhale and exhale in steady cycles.”^{cxli} These print based images are accompanied by a video of Perri and Ronan demonstrating the yoga sequences on the *Dance Teacher* website.^{cxlii} The DT Staff choice pick of favorite cover for 2013 was the August issue of *Yoga and Dance*.^{cxliii}

Dance Teacher magazine also promoted the “Solstice in Times Square: Athleta Mind Over Madness Yoga” to its dance readership.^{cxliv} On Friday June 21, 2013, in Times Square and the heart of Broadway where many dancers are employed as performers in theatrical shows, over 15,000 yoga enthusiasts gathered to meditate throughout the day from 7:30am – 9pm with yoga classes offered on five city blocks. The goal was to come together and “usher in the new season, with a united-we-pose mindset.”^{cxlv} While this article appears to be a stretch towards a dancers training practice, it does make a connection to the heart of where many dancers are employed in shows and musicals in New York.

The magazine also offers “teaching resources” online that features a short ten question B.K.S. Iyengar history quiz including questions like “what makes Iyengar yoga accessible to those who want to practice?,” “What are pranamayama and asanas?,” “Which famous choreographer was an early yoga practioner?”^{cxlvi} The answer to this last question was Merce Cunningham. It is apparent here that the editors are attempting to make a connection to basic teaching strategies for dance educators to utilize that incorporate asana terminology definitions and historical frameworks.

The online commercial yoga market is presented to dance audiences as a model to follow for developing followers for new dance businesses. This is evident in images of Laura Kasperzak, a New Jersey based hatha yoga practioner and her daughter in pictures of the two in yoga poses around her home presented in *Dance Teacher* magazine.^{cxlvii} She appeared on *Good Morning America* and uses instagram to document and promote her yoga practice to thousands of followers. The presence of this story in a dance magazine also suggests that yoga is something that is useful for dancers to share with the general public. The use of hatha yoga in social media

generating a feed to thousands of students is promoted as a model that dancer teachers might consider to develop their own business.

As dancers cross-train, the eclectic styles of physical knowledge that are being assimilated and transferred are in a state of liminality. Understanding Victor Turner's assumptions that the continuity of a practice may dissolve or change during liminal periods^{exlviii} creates a malleable concept for understanding transformation when dance and yoga movement practices mix. Normative structures of a hatha yoga class are turned upside down when incorporated into dance classes. One of the issues that the incorporation of asana into a modern or contemporary dance idiom causes is the displacement of hatha yoga postural sequences. As a result of blending, a new liminal state of being is provoked in the structure of practice through the dancing yoga body. As well the ritual of a dance class structure is continuously amended through the inclusion of Surya Namaskara mixed with demi-pliés.

At a bodily level, a dancer's training involves the cultivation of embodied intelligence as a way of knowing the world that is different from intellectual knowing. The re-writing of memory and knowledge makes the body a site of negotiation at the kinesthetic level in dance training. Ketu H. Katrak suggests that there are qualities that are gained and lost in the migration of gestures and dances.^{cxlix} In *The Gestures of Bharata Natyam: Migrating into Diasporic Contemporary Indian Dance* she gives the example of dancers trained in a Bharatanatyam community in Southern California and proposes what is gained is that the dancers in a 2nd generation of transferal of movement practices tend to experiment with different styles of dance "Bharatanatyam, modern, ballet, jazz, yoga."^{cl} However she feels what is lost is the conveyance of bhakti. Bhakti is an expression of devotion or love. While the gesture may be there, the "inner feeling of devotion" is harder to communicate. Bhakti gets "erased by the changes." Similarly in

the cross training of yoga in modern dance, there is a move towards an aesthetic emphasis on virtuosity where line, form, and technique are emphasized over expressivity of feeling and emotion. Bhakti will be opened up more extensively in the next chapter.

Commodification of Yoga Dance Products and Rave Culture

In 2012 I walked into a Starbucks and picked up one of the free weekly “App Pick of the Week” that advertised “Pocket Yoga – Practice Builder: Create custom yoga routines in minutes.”^{cli} Not too long before that I was traveling and noticed the airline carrier viewer screen in front of me was demonstrating “Travel and Yoga: A set of simple exercises and Yoga poses that can help passengers relax and enjoy their flying experience.” In the U.S., many companies are cashing in on aspects of yoga as exercise. There are many new yoga lines that include selling products such as yoga mats, yoga towels, coconut water, push-up bras and fitness wear by companies like Lululemon athletic wear. Even the Jacob’s Pillow Dance Online store has a yoga mat with the festival brand and a sales pitch that says, “represent Jacob’s Pillow at your yoga class with this blue yoga mat and bag.”^{clii} Certainly I purchase and enjoy this boom of merchandise. I love the fit of Lululemon’s yoga pants and coconut water is good for hydration. These products and materials are a vital part of the weave of yoga in dance practice. However it does point to an emphasis of marketing in yoga that displaces spirituality or the discipline of physical practice and focuses on profiteering. Rather than a guru/disciple, or direct teacher/student relationship that may be part of a meditation or asana yoga teaching setting, the connection becomes one of marketing company to yoga student buyer.

Commercialized yoga themed dance parties are happening in cities across the U.S. in yoga festivals, studios, and clubs. As I write this I am in San Diego and I have a routine of going

to Sol Yoga, a yoga exercise facility near where I live. In Hawai‘i, I frequent Corepower yoga. Both are commercial franchise studios and have a teaching staff with diverse yoga certifications. Each of these companies have advertised yoga dance jams. This usually means a yoga class followed by a yoga dance party. A *New York Times* article “Downward Dog at the Club” attributes the birth of yoga raves in 2007 to Rodo Bustos and Nico Pucci who wanted to develop a club and social scene without drugs and alcohol.^{cliii} Social fun, sobriety, strengthening the body, and clearing the mind are all goals of these events. The scene is described as including dancing, “singing yoga chants over a deafening rock beat,” vegetarian or raw food, and people in their twenties and thirties. In *Yoga Journal*, the article “Yoga Gets Remixed” describes Yoga Raves in 2012 as being hosted by “Get your Dance On” and noted the music is often a “fusion of underground electronic dance scene with Indian music, world beat, and kirtan.”^{cliv}



Figure 4.3: Advertisement for a Yoga Rave Party^{clv}

Popular fitness studios are also offering fusion style dance yoga classes. Buti yoga, taught at the Shockra dance studios, is marketed as a fitness style class. Shockra’s website describes Buti yoga as “a super fun and sexy workout that combines yoga, dance, circuits of plyometrics and

booty shaking.”^{clvi} This kind of class focuses on getting in touch with the body for exercises purposes and for commercial reasons sex sells.

Globalizing the Globalized: Dance-in-Yoga in China

The international presence of yoga as a hot trend in fitness now exists in many countries. One prime example of this is the Americanization of yoga in China. A *Yoga International* magazine article “China: The New Yoga Superpower (Millions of Chinese are embracing the ancient Indian practice of yoga – or at least its American version)” suggests that in China yoga studios are popular all over the country estimating over 10 million practioners.^{clvii} B.K.S. Iyengar instructor Faeq Biria suggests that the current introduction of hatha yoga in China “has been through America.”^{clviii} The implication here is that because of a heightened interconnectivity and transnational flow of movement practices between locations, a movement form may be introduced into a culture from a country outside its place of origin.

A young female student practicing yoga in Beiijing illustrates the emphasis of yoga as a fitness activity in China: “I often see people in the park practicing tai chi, but they don’t have such nice bodies like the people I see in magazine who practice yoga.”^{clix} She indicated television played a key role in her first introduction to hatha yoga by Zhang Huilan (Wai lana) supposedly inspired by a 1980s popular television series aired on CCTV (Chinese State Television) featuring Huilan teaching hatha yoga filmed in Hawai’i.^{clx}

Relationships and border wars between China and India have been strained since the 1950s. But in December 2013, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited India and was quoted as saying “his daughter practiced asana.” Due to the banning of a physical practice like Falun Gong in China, a spiritual movement that was seen as subversive in the potential to build global

networks, it is interesting to note that asana yoga seems to be not perceived as a practice that could create tensions by being connected to a spiritual tradition.

According to Wang Zhicheng, a philosophy professor at Zhejiang University: “We basically have religious freedom in China, unless somebody uses religion to stir up tensions.” Yoga, he adds, is “more like a spiritual-mental practice, a way of thinking, or a way of keeping healthy and happy,” and “Chinese culture very much appreciates the ‘cultivation of character,’ which is basically a humanist idea.”^{clxi}

In the summer of 2013, a conference called the “China-India Yoga Summit” was held in Guangzhou, China led by Iyengar and teachers. 1300 students were in attendance at this event that was supported by government “officials in New Delhi and Beijing.” “Yogi Yoga” a yoga studio franchise that opened in China made over “\$4 million” in 2013.

“When Yogi Yoga opened in 2003, it promised to ‘bring pure yoga from India.’ This arrived in the form of Yogi Mohan, a teacher from Rishikesh. But when he settled in China, he was shocked: people asked if he’d studied yoga in America.”^{clxii}

In 2005 presenters from Australia, Thailand, India, and China convened in Beijing to support the mission of the International Association of Yoga Therapists. The focus was on “the state of yoga in China, including trends in Yoga business, teacher training, and research.”^{clxiii} This report indicated that there was a rise in popularity of yoga primarily among women “between the ages of 20 – 35.” In this generational age range there seemed to be a real interest in

individuals owning yoga businesses or being a yoga teacher as this had “prestige and status” associated with these positions.

The world renowned Beijing Dance Academy features six dance departments including Chinese National and Folk Dance, Chinese Classic Dance, Ballet, Choreography, Social Dance and the department of Dance Study.^{clxiv} BDA also offers yoga as an optional part of the training program for secondary school students.

Yoga and modern dance have blended in Shanghai. A studio called “Yoga Space” presents what Timeout Shanghai calls “free spirit yoga dance.” The class is described as fusing “yoga postures and breathing with modern dance” with “ambient electro and Hindi psytrance” music. An observer of the class describes the experience as more dance than yoga.^{clxv} Yoga dance is in the clubs as well. A youtube video called “Freestyle Yoga Dance at Club Gplus Shanghai China” shows a solo female dancer with the caption “DJ, Modern Dancer and Yoga Teacher Weila Wu gets down.”^{clxvi} Wu is described as a yoga teacher and the owner of Shiva Lounge and Yoga Space in Shanghai.^{clxvii} The online video opens with a shot of candles on a small black stage as Wu dressed in black yoga pants and a sports bra performs a series of asana interspersed with free flowing full body movement for a club house audience rocking out to pop music and occasional strobe lights. The reason for establishing yoga’s presence in China is to offer an example outside of the U.S. of the transnational presence of yoga combined with modern dance.

Commodification and Hybridity

What are the ethics of hybridity of yoga in dance when there is a move from an Indian philosophical system into a globalized practice that includes a commercialized mainstream

product culture? The consumerism of dance in yoga could be attributed to any of the following: the continued appropriation of “the other” through “orientalism,” a search for alternative meaning in modern society to understand self, a marketing device to make money, the pleasure or enjoyment of a product, or a focus on the physical aspects of the body for better health. One way to conceive of consumerism is to imagine beyond the polarizing concepts of choosing one reason and include multiplicity in a more circular fashion as being both and all at the same time. Being both and all means that each perspective exists and has value. Each understanding has meaning to a particular group of people and different perceptions of what mainstream product culture is and does can exist alongside each other.

The globalization of different practices such as yoga dance, pop music, and the club merging has the potential to exploit the spiritual heritage of deeply rooted histories and practices of yoga and be perceived as a kind of McYoga, a fast food chain of yoga dissemination that could be understood as selling out. What is lost here is the particularity of a practice that becomes homogenized in mass culture. It precisely becomes ‘site specific’ rather than ‘site particular’ in the same way global touring art can universalize location without engaging in a situated and multi-layered exchange with dancers, yoga practitioners, and environment.^{clxviii} In this same space and time, in the plurality of yoga dance raves and commercial events, there is also a creative space for the reinvention and remixing of ideas and practices that becomes situated in meaning according to the place and people who participate. The problem with this perspective is that it could be conceived as justifying cultural appropriation. I think though, there are many forms that understanding yoga-in-dance takes. Like island land masses interconnected by fluid life giving waters, multiple meanings may exist at the same time. Sometimes visible on the

surface of land, other times partially submerged in lagoons, and even the not seen deeper depths at the bottom of the sea.

Space has to be given for the interpretation of pathways with dance and yoga consumerism. The values, needs, and intentions of community networks and individuals are different and diverse. Here I distinguish between needs and wants. There are needs of situated communities, which can be quite particular. For example dancers are teaching hatha yoga and are able to make a living and support their artistry through this. There are artists, ashrams, and long time yoga practioners who are part of developing yoga products and yoga dance events that serve their communities. And returning to Hunter's discourse on situated textualities, in the making of other we remake ourselves.^{clxix} A new culture of yoga dance emerges commercially that serves a situated need and is enjoyed. Alternatively the wants are how those needs get translated into a larger environment of commercial culture. Without the needs, the wants fade fast, become dated, and have little longevity. The commodification of dance and yoga practices through exercise or raves can be perceived as uplifting or demoralizing. A yoga product line not designed by or in collaboration with yoga practioners may be understood as insensitive to spirituality where designs and patterns have very specific meanings and are created for reasons related to spiritual or cultural context. The commercialization of products that results in yoga pants, print t-shirts, and mats may or may not be created by yoga practioners or as a collaboration between the commercial seller and yoga communities. At the same time, in a postmodern world people are inspired by ideas from many different places. There have been many successful yoga products and dance yoga events created by yoga practioners and with large commercial sellers that results in financial success, shared revenue, and respect for heritage.

Commercialization

As I am writing this dissertation it is December and Christmas is here. Recently I read an article that was celebrating Christmas as a one day only holiday. I was intrigued at this lack of knowledge of the Christmas season. The article made me think that the commercialization of Christmas has a similar effect to that of the commercialization of yoga-in-dance in that commodification buries the narratives of spiritual traditions and practices.

Because of having grown up in my own family practice of Christianity, I think about an analogy between the rich history and tradition yoga and the commodification of yoga much like the history of the Christmas season and the commercialized shopping frenzy that Christmas represents in secular practices today. For Christians, Christmas is a season that starts in early December with Advent and continues into January through the celebration of Epiphany. There are many diverse denominations who have varying approaches to this ritual of remembrance and celebration. In the Protestant denomination I grew up in and the many different Protestant and Catholic churches I danced in during this season and spiritual holidays in Indiana and New York, I found that shared elements included a rich tradition of focus on liturgical colors, music, the sharing of scriptures and stories, special holiday foods and eating together in community. Christmas traditions date back hundreds of years in Europe. For Christians at Christmas, spiritual practices are celebrated over many weeks. This holiday is part of a larger and seasonal liturgical cycle. For non-Christians who observe Christmas, many celebrate it as a one day holiday and forget about it. Commercial entities capitalize on Christmas as a shopping frenzy. The true meaning is painted over. The practices of a long history of prayers, meditation, carols, and liturgical rituals are ignored. Yet at the same time I am not saying that Christmas is not meaningful to those who are not practitioners of a Christian faith. There are members of my

extended family who either grew up practicing a Christian faith but no longer do and those who have never practiced at all or belong to a different religion. Many of them still practice Christmas. My non-Christian family members have shared with me that Christmas for them is time to celebrate family, connect with a philosophy of love, and focus on generosity and giving to one another. Both the tradition and the commercialization of the tradition may have value and deep meaning, depending on a person's perspective, experience, and relation to the custom. The comparison I make between Christmas and yoga is that yoga is also a spiritual discipline that has a rich history of holidays, seasons and complex observances associated with it. There are a variety of yoga traditions and practices. In the U.S., commercial markets have washed over the history and spiritual practices of yoga in a similar way with yoga.

Comparing the history and commodification of Christmas and yoga is a potentially simplistic analogy because it also glosses over the complexity of histories, place, culture, and reasons why people may or may not choose to follow a particular religion or spirituality. Also Christmas is a specific religious season and yoga encompasses a spiritual discipline. The greater point is in the way a practice is acknowledged and how it is articulated differently in people's lives. The way I learned about the Christmas season was growing up. The season was always fun and what I did during that time was absorb the knowledge of the practices. What I didn't realize until later as an adult is that the way we celebrated the Christmas season was a cultural way of passing on traditions. The way I learn about yoga practices is similar. Through shared experiences with my sangham, I absorb practices. All the small bits, stories and songs, begin to come together.

The practices of yoga carry a substantial and significant history. If we take the time to learn about and remember where these traditions have come from, merged, or created something

new, these become gifts of wisdom to be shared in our dance community. As in the example of the commercialization of Christmas, commodification in the U.S. is one force that has buried the roots of yoga practice. For dancers to go back and connect with the rich and varied strands of yoga history and practice is to re-connect to who we are as a dance community today.

Conversations with Artists

This section is a performative dialogue with modern/postmodern dance artists who incorporate yoga into their movement performance practice and a reflection on classes. It focuses on positive ways yoga has and can travel in dance practices. The individuals interviewed include a former dance teacher and colleague Loretta Livingston who has influenced the way I both teach dance technique and embody creative process in my choreography, and dance colleague Dr. Uttara Asha Coorlawala whose creative yoga, dance process, and articles have had an impact on the development and thinking for this project. The text is performative in that it is a summary of notes from research interviews I conducted with the artists and the inclusion of extensive excerpted quotes from these conversations that I have compiled. I include long quotes because I place emphasis on oral history and storytelling. I also provide my own interpretation of the quotations to help guide the reader through my critical assumptions and developments in my thinking from these oral histories.

In the context of the two interviews, my methodology was to engage with a collaborative conversation and writing process. Some of the early feminist scholarship and the women's liberation movement felt that women's voices and stories are a way of understanding culture. (Visweswaran, 1994)^{clxx} (Anderson and Jack, 1991)^{clxxi} (Salazar, 1991)^{clxxii} Women interviewing women creates agency for feminists. The value of women's history that had been for the most

part silenced for centuries could be illuminated through the practice of oral history research and story. The interview is a site for encounter and situated exchange. However interviews also represent only a fragment and create a frame around a particular conversation in a particular time and space. In an interview situation, authorial control often lies with the researcher asking the questions.^{clxxiii} Collaborative research cannot be entirely separated from power relations. In the formulation of sharing my conversations with Livingston and Coorlawala, I recognize my situated perspective in relation to the artist's work and how I frame our discussion. My reason for including this text is that in my experience in modern dance studio practice, stories about dance are not usually read to students from a book. They are shared orally from the experiences of the dance teachers and students. I wanted to have the feeling and felt presence of this kind of dialogue in the performativity of this paper.

I also include my own observations from yoga dance classes at the American College Dance Festival Association annual conference held at California State University, Dominguez Hills in 2012, and an analysis of a course that I taught as research in the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa dance program where yoga asana was included in the warmups for modern dance technique classes. This study included observing and participating in classes at the festival, journal notes and conversations with artists, and a questionnaire survey with students and dancers in these environments. An overview of the questions and answers from the survey are included this chapter.

Uttara Asha Coorlawala, New York, U.S. and Mumbai, India

Dr. Uttara Asha Coorlawala is a dance scholar and choreographer who has taught at Barnard College, Princeton University, and the Alvin Ailey School of Dance. Her choreography

synthesizes yoga, modern dance, and bharatanatyam. She has performed internationally in India, Japan, Europe and the United States.^{clxxiv} In 2013 I was involved in arranging to bring Coorlawala to the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in collaboration with Monisha Das Guptas at the Center for South Asian Studies to teach a guest master class in the dance program and as a keynote speaker for the Sensing South Asia Conference. I also had the opportunity to talk with Coorlawala via a video call from my residence in San Diego while she was in Mumbai on July 18, 2014 and subsequently by phone and email.

Coorlawala studied ballet and modern dance with Graham and Cunningham as well as Bharatyanatyam and yoga. A native of India, her training began in the early 60s with ballet and B.K.S. Iyengar classes in Mumbai. “I was in Bombay looking for a ballet class when I ran into these people doing hatha yoga in shorts with B.K.S. Iyengar and I had no idea what they were doing. I thought I want to do that. I went and asked Iyengar if I could join and he said yes.”^{clxxv} In the early 1970s she was drawn to develop a spiritual practice of yoga and began a practice at a nearby ashram. There she found that there were people of different faiths, not just Hinduism, practicing yoga. “Had it been only one faith I might not have gone in because I’m not a Hindu, I’m Zarathushtrian.”^{clxxvi} During this time period, Coorlawala had a choreographic research grant and her own studio to work in at the National Center for the Performing Arts. The rhythm of her life was to dance during the week and spend her weekends at her ashram. In yoga, she sought meditation to help her be a better dancer.

Kara: Why did you feel that yoga would make you a better dancer?

Uttara: First of all I wanted to improve my concentration through meditation, not make mistakes at the barre so I could get what comes next and memorize steps. The

second thing was that I felt that just the act of chanting every morning was something I knew would improve my practice as well as my focus. All of those just fed into my creativity. I would warm up and meditate before choreographing. And when I was stuck I would stop and meditate. I always knew what to do after meditating.^{clxxvii}

From 1965 – 1967, Coorlawala attended Smith College in the U.S. Her choreographer teacher at Smith, Rosalind DeMille, suggested she study at Jacob’s Pillow over the summers “because there would be some connection with Indian Dance Forms.”^{clxxviii} There, she had some exchanges with Ted Shawn that later led to her own research and scholarship on Ruth St. Denis. The approach to choreography that she learned at that time was Jungian and “that you bring it out of yourself.”^{clxxix} She was taught to generate the movement, ideas, and creativity from within. In New York City she studied with Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham. She spent two years at both schools. When she first saw Graham’s technique class, she realized the movements were like yoga and felt in harmony with this training style because of her background with B.K.S. Iyengar.

Kara: Did Martha Graham ever talk about the inclusion of yoga in any of the dance classes that you took at her studio?

Uttara: My whole relationship with taking Graham class was through my connection with yoga because I had the hatha yoga before. Because of the hatha yoga I moved through the Graham levels of classes very quickly. Her seated positions look like hatha exercises. So within three months I was already intermediate and I had no

modern training prior. I once asked Bertram Ross at the Graham school about this. I said look this is just like yoga. He said we don't know what yoga is. All of this came out of Martha's body. But Martha did talk about the yoga kundalini in a class I was in. You know her dance exercise where you rise up, the breathings, she said that was the kundalini rising.^{clxxx}

Coorlawala teaches modern dance technique internationally. In her classes she incorporates asana and breathing techniques to open up physicality. She found that in order to have full bodily involvement the dancer had to surrender in a certain way to the movement.

Kara: I was looking through popular magazines for young dancers like *Dance Teacher Magazine* and *Dance Magazine* for references to yoga and dance for this research. So there are all these articles that are only looking at physical posture not looking at any other spiritual aspects of yoga practices. What I noticed they are saying over and over, the one word that kept repeating in all of those magazines, was the word "non-judgemental." They say that what we like as dancers is that hatha yoga training is a non-judgemental form. So I have been trying to turn that around in my head. What do they really mean? Why are these dancers, and writers about dance, seeking this idea of non-judgemental? I certainly know for myself that meditation and chanting brings me into a state of openness and receptivity. However my early dance class training was in a very competitive environment. So what I've been wondering is, if this is a value that young dancers are seeking and finding in hatha yoga classes, how does that change the culture of the dance form

itself? Is that value going to change dance training and performance and in what way does it do that?

Uttara: I really think the way people teach dance now is considerably different than the way it used to be taught. It's more about allowing the body to flow rather than trying to control it. Whatever you want to say about the hippies, I think that revolution demanded the change. That revolution in part was influenced by the discovery of yoga. I teach the idea that you are your body's friend and your friend is your body. Whereas in Graham and ballet classes I was learning how to master the body to conquer and dominate it. And to demand from it. The revelation that was in my spiritual practice was, no no no, I (body) am your friend, don't do that to me. And that was a tremendous powerful revelation of sharing love with my own body instead of treating it like a slave. The way I teach is not to push the dancer to that place, to suffer and dominate, but rather to enable them to get to that place of deep connection.^{clxxxix}

Coorlawala also incorporates yoga into her choreography both on the physical asana plane and through subtle and philosophical interpretations. She reflects on two pieces of her own choreography, "The Birth of Stars" and "Meditating" in *New Directions in Indian Dance*^{clxxxii} and in full in her dissertation *Classical and contemporary Indian dance: Overview, criteria, and a choreographic analysis*.^{clxxxiii} In these texts she looks back holistically at her creative process and argues that "collaborative work introduced innovative techniques and elements that have since become part of the vocabulary and syntax of Navanritya or the New Indian Dance."^{clxxxiv}

“The Birth of Stars”^{clxxxv} is a lyrical dance that incorporated modern, yoga, and bharatanatyam. The dance is about Shakti consciousness and explores the “first sutra of the Praytabhijna-Hridayam, Chitih Svatantra Vishvasiddhi Hetuhu (Chiti creates the universe of her own free will).”^{clxxxvi} Coorlawala intermingled “multiple accessways” in terms of “movement techniques” and “aesthetic” to create the dance. In a dvd of a performance of “The Birth of Stars” recorded at the Peabody conservatory in Baltimore, Maryland in 1988, I observed Coorlawala’s movement focuses on the use of hastra mudra or hand gestures. Wearing a white one piece tunic with pants and long sleeves, she begins rooted on the floor and moves through various seated positions. Her hands and wrists are constantly undulating in a circular motion that is repeated throughout the dance. The gestures vibrate, folding and unfolding hands and arms, in what appears to be the pulsation of stars throughout galaxies and universes.

Her dance “Meditating” was an improvisation that focused on elements of “asana and adavu within and beyond their traditional frames of reference.”^{clxxxvii} Hatha yoga sequences were mixed with the adavu mudra hand gestures. The work used projection of a fifteen dimensional star projected onto the stage. The intention was that the dance opened with the movement of the dancer and the lines of the projection as separate. As the choreography unfolds the dancer becomes the neelabindu through connecting with the projection design to “dissolve boundaries between the dancing body and its environment.”^{clxxxviii} In the context of her choreographic process, Coorlawala writes about how performing dance is a way of knowing and being in the world.

Improvising dance as meditation taught me to hold a simultaneous inner and outward focus. While mind, muscles, energies, and balancing mechanisms drew upon inner

resources, performing elicited a kind of multi-focused awareness of distances and environments, of faces, lights, surfaces, movements, and sounds both off and on stage. Images of sculptural postures, abstract impulses as inexplicable as a need to break into a run, to change path – these surfaced in my awareness as simultaneously as my body performed them. ^{clxxxix}

In her experience of weaving dance practices, aesthetics and traditions, her kinesthetic intelligence, personal narrative and process is what is present. It is a dancer's bodily experience of movement.

While she was in a state of blissfully enjoying her creative process, Coorlawala was not prepared for the response or feedback she would have in sharing this in her dance writing. I have recently heard many U.S. based dancers and dance scholars express a concern over sharing their creative process and experience of spirituality in their work in writing texts for fear that their experiences would not be accepted or valued. Coorlawala comments on this kind of challenging encounter and struggle with her own scholarship.

I had reveled in the experiential dimensions of creative action. Yet, at that same time, I was not prepared for the politically disastrous consequences of acknowledging the same: that to speak of the energy of a hand gesture can be read as capitulation to Orientalistic visions of Eastern mysteries; to speak of flow is to turn into a New Age softhead; to speak of love is to box oneself into hermeneutic mazes; to express bhakti is to en-gender images of weakness, of whining pining women, of sadomasochistic fantasies of abject disciples and controlling masters. ^{cxc}

In April 1984 during her tour of France, she performed “Oh My Mind”^{cxci} at the Salle de Tanneurs. The work was one dance among several pieces based on the Shiva Sutras composed and performed by singer Nada Clyne. Coorlawala presented original solo choreography that featured a series of dancing asana. In the work, Coorlawala slowly moves through asana postures one after another in a continuous slow rhythm. At one point the lyrics include the phrase, “Oh my mind why don’t you watch what you do.” In this moment in the dance Coorlawala slowly rolls over her back and rises up in a full body gesture that seems to wrap and extend the idea of the mind beyond a thinking process, beyond the body, and through time and space by creating a feeling of unity and connection with the floor, the lights, the stage, and the music.

Kara: What were you hoping to communicate or experience in Oh My Mind by performing asana movements?

Uttara: I wasn’t looking to communicate. I put the two together because there is one aspect of doing asana that is dry in a way. It’s not bhakti, there’s no rasa until you dance it. It’s clarity, it’s neutrality, it’s framing, it’s sensitizing the body and training and disciplining. It’s tapasya. I never experienced it like dance. I wanted the asana to dance.^{cxcii}

What I understand from my conversation with Uttara is that the relation between her yoga practices and creative process are intertwined as a key experience in the way she creates dances, embraces scholarship, and lives life. Her easily relatable philosophical intertwining of Graham and Indian dance practice further suggests that Indian practices had an impact on early modern dance in the 1900s.

The interview looks back to make connections to how modern dance and yoga practices benefit from each other in basic premise and formation and then looks forward into the present to describe how meditation practices have the potential to affect dance training and performance. Through the embodiment of meditation and asana practice, Coorlawala moves beyond what can sometimes be disabling political commentary and into a space of hybridity, compassionate humanness, and a relation to a situated knowledge and perspective of a dancer's bodily experience of movement. In Coorlawala's classes and performances she beautifully weaves dance styles and traditions to open up physicality.

Loretta Livingston, Los Angeles, California

Loretta Livingston is a contemporary choreographer, teacher, performer, and improvisation artist based in Los Angeles. She was a member of the Bella Lewitsky Dance Company on the West Coast for over a decade. For twenty five years she directed her performance ensemble Loretta Livingston & Dancers that toured nationally and internationally. Her company received Southern California's Lester Horton Dance Awards for choreography and performance multiple times in the various categories of individual performance for Livingston, company performance, and company choreography. A few additional highlights include a California DanceMaker Grant, a COLA Individual Artist Award from the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, and the Distinguished Artist Award from the Music Center of Los Angeles. Livingston uses yogic breath and energetics as a subtle underpinning in her postmodern dance choreography, improvisational performance work, and teaching. In her performance work she is interested in exploring spoken texts, vocals, and video. Livingston has collaborated with artists in Korea, Turkey, and Singapore. Livingston is a Certified

Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analyst and currently a professor in the Dance Department the University of California, Irvine (U.C.I.).^{cxci}

I was a student of Livingston's while working on my M.F.A. in Dance degree at the University of California, Irvine. Three times a week I took her dance technique class over a period of two years. In these classes she included asana and breathing techniques as a subtle motivator for centering, awareness, and depth in training. Since then I have collaborated as a performing video artist with Livingston in Istanbul, Turkey, Seoul, Korea, and Paris, France. Her approach to teaching and choreography had a great impact on my own development as a dance educator and artist. The notes from this section reference my experiences with her as a teacher and colleague from 2004 until the present, and, a recent conversation in Oceanside, California on June 14, 2014.

A native of California, Livingston grew up in the rural central part of the state and studied ballet in a studio in the countryside. She considered her childhood dance training to be "physically rigorous" but not "stylistically rigorous." She studied what she calls "small town ballet with a wonderful teacher but it was not pre-professional training."^{cxci} With one of her cousins, she would sometimes take a modern dance class in Sacramento. Livingston recalls her first memories of yoga were with her family. In the 1950s and 60s she and her cousin would drag out a mattress and perform yoga poses on her lawn from photos they had seen in books or magazines. Her grandfather would also regularly demonstrate a single yoga pose, though she had no idea where he picked it up.

Kara: When did yoga first enter your life and what form did it take?

Loretta: As for the yoga work, I think I could humorously say the early part of my experience of yoga was as a child. Honestly, my paternal grandfather, my Livingston grandfather, taught me my first asana and I was about 5 years old. He taught me Sirsasana. He taught me tripod headstand when I was 5 years old. That was my first asana. He used to demonstrate it regularly with a suit. Wearing a suit. And all of the things in his pockets would fall. He smoked a pipe so the pipe would fall out, and he had these hard candies, these Danish candies he liked, and they would all fall out of his wool suit jacket pocket. So around him there would be these bits of pipe tobacco and things. I just thought it was wonderful.^{cxv}

Livingston began her rigorous modern dance training as a student in college. For two years she attended California State University, Fresno where she was an art major and saw Lewitsky perform for the first time. The next year she took several dance workshops with her. In 1971 she moved to Los Angeles to attend the California Institute of the Arts for final pre-professional dance training and to complete a B.F.A. in dance under the tutelage of Lewitsky and Donald McKayle. While still in school, she apprenticed with Lewitsky for a month and then started to tour with her in 1973.

Livingston feels the work with Lewitsky was a formative period for her as a young person and professional artist. Lewitsky had been a featured performer in Lester Horton's company, having trained with him beginning in 1934.^{cxvi} He built his technique and performative style on her body. She came to the public eye and made the first part of her reputation as a performer in his company. As she was getting older and after World War II

Horton and Lewitsky founded the Dance Theater of Los Angeles in 1946 and then she founded her own company in 1966.^{cxvii}

Kara: What is your modern/postmodern dance training background?

Loretta: Bella gave us company class everyday that was what she felt was part of our pay. It was all the time for all of those years while I was there and she also taught us how to teach. In my opinion, I was involved in lineage training. Bella had been a protégé and star performer of Lester Horton. So I would call Lester the first generation and Bella the second generation.^{cxviii}

Livingston left Lewitsky's company in 1983 to start her own performance ensemble and develop her choreography. Out on her own, she left behind a dance practice that included daily technique classes. As she tried to establish a personal practice outside of her "mentor teacher company class with Bella, and outside of a structured school environment"^{cxix} in the 80s and 90s, she had to create a training practice with disciplines that were affordable for a "freelance" artist and available in the city of Los Angeles. This involved seeking out community classes that included physical weight work at a gym, yoga, ballet, and some modern dance classes in private studios. She observed the teachers were often younger than herself as her own generation was either teaching in universities or performing in companies.

Kara: How did you perceive that yoga was becoming part of dance class training in Los Angeles?

Loretta: I noticed that modern dance was already starting to splinter in terms of training. What I typically encountered in the classes was a mixture of ballet, yoga, and what they called release technique at that time, which really wasn't technique it was stylistics. So there would be these classes where artists younger than me would say, OK, let's do some yoga to warmup. And then in the middle of the class there would be a segue and we would begin doing the bits of ballet that are folded into most dance classes meaning positions of the feet and legs, the use of oppositional pull and plié work, tendus, dégagé, battements, in a kind of lay way - jazz uses it, modern uses it. And then there would be center choreographic and stylistic progressions. So this was what I was observing as a kind of mid-career dance artist. I had been practicing yoga for a long time as well and I was observing this kind of eclecticism from the emerging generation who may not have had lineage training and they may have started to get mixtures bringing in somatics.^{cc}

Livingston's dance company was in existence from 1985 to 2009. Unlike Lewitsky, she did not offer company class ever day. She recalls that in the year 2000 she noticed a shift in her dancers preparation for rehearsal.

Kara: Did your dance company members have an eclectic dance foundation?

Loretta: They would come to rehearsal, walk into the studio, and say I'm ready I've had yoga class. So I started learning from those dancers that they were using yoga

class as training. The yoga certification programs in the U.S. are excellent. It's beautiful training and you can count on it.^{cci}

In fall of 2003 Livingston was hired as a professor in the dance program at the University of California, Irvine. As a student from 2004 – 2006, I recall her technique classes as often starting with breathing and contemplation exercises on the floor that then move into asana postures to warm up the body in preparation for dance exercises. The dance combinations that followed would also sometimes include yoga asana. There was “an organic chronology of materials” in the development of the class. Every class was different. Livingston would sometimes focus on improvisation and breathing techniques as instrumental to the movement of flow in the body and throughout the class she would share her life experience. It was in the talking story that the class gleaned wisdom into how she structured her dance practice.

Livingston hoped that in her dance classes she could prepare the dancer with a series of integrated tools that would enable them to understand how to put different training styles together and to build a practice to keep their bodies safe. She observes that visiting dance artists to the university often utilize yoga asana. She feels dancers today need to be prepared to work with this in professional settings after they leave school.

Kara: I was a student in your technique classes 2004 – 2006. I recall that you incorporated yoga asana and philosophy in your classes. I'm wondering how you approach bringing yoga into your teaching?

Loretta: I wanted to prepare the students with three things that I knew they were going to get if they went on to dance with or study with dancers in their own generation, or a generation above them, but not my generation. These three things are they were going to be expected to be proficient in yoga, proficient in ballet, and proficient in picking up stylistic choreography. And I would tell them this in class. I would say you are going to encounter classes outside. They are going to be named release technique. And you are also going to be expected to proficient in at least the yoga warrior stances, the standing asanas, and some of the seated asanas. And you are going to be expected to have a conversant knowledge of ballet and you are going to be expected to know the Bartinieff fundamentals. If you go into a yoga warrior stance, the particulars of the front leg needing to be aligned, parallel, and the front leg with the knee, then the back leg with the 45 degree turn in of the foot, the cupping of the foot, the weight on the outside edge, the weight on the inside edge, the relationship of the pelvis, those are very complicated body architectures that one doesn't know automatically. My goal is to prepare them well enough that they don't get hurt doing a warrior stance. It's transmission. I want to help them in the best way I can.^{ccii}

Livingston also brings yogic breath, energetics, and asana as a subtle underpinning in her into her choreographic and improvisational performance work. I have observed this hybridity as a video artist collaborator in two of her international performances. This includes the work "Surface" choreographed for dancers from Istanbul and premiered in Turkey for the Dance Camera Istanbul Festival at the Sumer Bank, Karaköy in November 2009 organized by artist

Onur Topal Sumer. Also the improvisational performance in “Ongoing Conversations” presented at the Arko Theater in Seoul, Korea in April 2013 in collaboration with the ING group including Korean dance artists Kim, San-Jin, and Choi, Moonea, Korean actor Geun, Jung II and composer musician Woo Kwang Hyuk, as well as Paris improviser Claire Filmon.

In a 2003 *Los Angeles Times* review of Livingston’s premiere of “Leaving (Evidence)” at the L.A. Theater Center, Lewis Segal interprets her choreography as a “meditation on the impermanence of dance and the isolation of the artist.”^{cciii} In an article about one of Livingston’s earlier company performances including “Birdnest,” “Invitations,” and “From Apogee to Perigee” at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre, Seagull describes her work as incorporating multiplicity in the artistry. “A former leading dancer in the Bella Lewitzky company, Livingston has long been an extraordinarily thoughtful choreographer, adept at defining subtle emotional states through movement nuances yet unafraid of using non-dance vocabularies for contrast, emphasis and, especially, to convey the vigor of life too often refined away in the dance-making process.”^{cciv}

As an audience participant, I saw “June Moon (Dressed in White)” a performance of her dance company that premiered on June 24, 2005 at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center downtown Los Angeles, Little Tokyo and I also saw an earlier rendition of the work that same year performed at Irvine Barclay by U.C.I. dance students performed outside in front of the theater. The choreography for this performance included yoga asana. This site particular work included choreography by Livingston, a video projection design and installation by Kate Johnson. Original music was composed by Alan Terricciano. Six of her company members performed including Gregory Barnett, Heather Gillette, Jeremy Hahn, Alyson Jones,

Rachel Lopez, and Patrick Damon Rago.^{ccv} Additional cast members included a chorus of fourteen performers. The event was part of the Dance Camera West 2005 Festival.

The hour long piece at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center was performed outside on a plaza. The audience was shaped in a U formation. The dancers were already set in place and in performance mode as the audience showed up. Some were eating fruits on a raised stage in the plaza, others were dancing off in a garden to the side. Sight visibility of the choreographic action depended upon whether the viewer was walking into the space or sitting. The reason for being outside rather than on an indoor stage was so that the moon could be visible. Some dancers were standing, others sitting. Improvisationally they slowly changed their physical posture. In this particular piece, Livingston blended the structure of the spatial environment with the movement. "When I have a vast space it takes an outside eye to direct and be able to create a field of dancers, a wall of dancers, a ring of dancers. They're beautiful architectural structures."^{ccvi} The choreography also had a great deal of kinetic rhythm and energy with performers dancing on and off the main portable stage and weaving in and out of the building columns. In both performances of "June Moon" what stood out for me was a chorus of dancers performing the use of yoga hand mudras in synchronous unison.^{ccvii}

Kara: With "June Moon," you incorporated mudras. I particular remember your use of chin mudra. What was your inspiration for this?

Loretta: In June Moon, the mudras were an ending to the body. An ending to the upper limb extremity. A way to have a design element that works beyond that. I think hands are very expressive and kind of finish the end of the upper body. That was in 2005 and that was 9 years ago. I would say that in my current thinking, mudra

for me is the whole body. The whole body is a mudra at all times. The body is a seal on life. It wouldn't just be hands and fingers, or full lotus, half lotus, that the stillness, the whole body is a mudra to allow this process to be clear. So that kind of oneness is clear. I am interested in the idea that the body is mudra. The whole body.

As an artist, Livingston does not see her self as a “careerist.” Dance for her is a life practice, a way of living. She is a student of Buddhist dharma and a Zen meditation practitioner. Her response to her creative work is not only from a yogic perspective or the disciplinary orientation of the professional field of modern and postmodern dance. This interiority of chanting, meditation, and sutra studies that is part of her Buddhist studies is something Livingston says she brings into her yoga asana practice which she feels is a “manifestation of the interior.” The focus of yoga in our conversation was primarily centered on physical asana practice. In her artwork she is more interested in “process rather than product” and about dance “as a way of being.”

Kara: For me how I live in the world is about serving, about discovering the self, that has been my artist's way of life in any context. I'm thinking back to my experience in your dance classes. How do you teach, present, or transmit this idea of how one makes a practice? What is your goal?

Loretta: Philosophically what is my goal? At this moment in time speaking to you looking at the Pacific ocean and palm trees my goal is that these young artists will live longer than me and that they will understand if nothing else one thing that they

can build a practice. They can build a practice for themselves as living beings. Living in the body house. Whether they become a movement artist or not. That the practice of breath, movement, mind, service, compassion, and interiority, with all of these things they can make a practice. It doesn't have to be my practice but they will understand from me that this is something they can make. What do you think of that?^{ccviii}

It is not easy to make a living in the field of dance in the U.S. and as Loretta suggested, professional dancers often have to piece together many different kinds of training that require multiple skill sets. Through the directorship of her own dance company, Livingston acknowledged yoga as an important source of training for the contemporary dancer. She embraced a philosophy that dance is more than a career, it is a way of life. The cultivation of a daily practice is part of what supported Loretta in continuing her craft as a performer, teacher, and choreographer. The wisdom gleaned from these experiences is a situated knowledge about ways in which eclectic dance and yoga asana practices can support the training of emerging artists.

Observation and Reflection of Personal Teaching Strategies in Dance at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (U.H.M.)

At the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa I incorporate yoga asana into the warmups for modern dance technique classes I have taught. I include this focus in technique not only because it is my primary research area, but because contemporary dancers need to be skilled in asana techniques in order to be competitive in professional dance company work and I believe hatha yoga creates a solid foundation for warming up the body. I also offered a yoga focused graduate

seminar so that the dancers who are preparing to teach or choreograph can have some vocabulary for ways in identifying the hybridity of yoga in modern dance historically and culturally.^{ccix} The reason to incorporate yoga is out of cultural respect and to include in curriculum an openness to placing value on different ways of being and knowing in practice. What follows is not written to imply that there is any one way to create a yoga in dance training. This is a an exploration of artistic practice for research purposes in an institutional setting.

I first learned yoga-in-dance at The Juilliard School while I was a student from 1989 to 1993. Technique classes with modern dance teacher Laura Glenn often included asana work as part of the daily pre-technique and technique warmups. In addition, there were optional classes in Kripalu yoga offered on the weekends. I also trained at Whitecloud in New York, a movement studio that focused on gyrotonics, a blending of yoga, pilates, swimming, and movement both with machines and freestanding. When I left this structured school system, I pieced my daily technique training together with a combination of modern, ballet, and hatha yoga classes. As I auditioned for dance performances in New York, I also found that a proficiency in asana work was assumed or desired because yoga was being incorporated into various dancer's choreography. In 1993 I began a yoga meditation practice that has been part of my daily life since that time. In 1995 I was invited to be the artistic director of the Omega Dance Company in residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. This company was founded by Carla DeSola and our professional work was both interfaith and secular. I would spend my weekends at an ashram and then much of this yoga practice inspired my creative process with Omega. Yoga had an effect on my aesthetic choices in choreography and experiences performing with Omega and continues on in my creative process today.

It is with this history and focus that I conducted research for a study on yoga and dance that included the documentation of an Intermediate/Advanced Modern Dance class taught at U.H.M. in Spring Semester 2012. The class was our regular required technique training and not specialized as a yoga-in-dance intensive. The students were primarily undergraduate and graduate dance majors. During this semester I experimented with incorporating yoga asana with movement in the warmup and combinations across the floor, something I had been doing for many years in modern technique classes, but had a different awareness of as I reflected on writing about the experiences. On May 2, 2012 I invited the class, about 20 students, to fill out an optional questionnaire about their experiences of yoga-in-dance.^{ccx} The following are excerpts of the experiences the students shared in the questionnaires that were given at the end of the semester.^{ccxi}

Questions:

How do you understand similarities or differences in hatha yoga and modern dance practices?
What does the practice of yoga as a philosophy or physical practice in dance class do for your own training as a dancer or performer?

Shared Experiences:

“Yoga and modern dance both think of energy transferring and projecting through the body from an internal source. I have experienced that both yoga and modern training do this.”

“Dance and yoga are crossing over into each other because of the pop culture availability of yoga in fitness studios.”

“I’ve done training in yoga and dance in California. Yoga has really helped me with flexibility and physical strength. Yoga is a focus on breathing for me and I believe that this is very much used in modern dance classes in order to control movement with deeper emotion and connection through space. Similarities between the two include breathing, flexibility, physical strength, and core concentration.”

“As a dancer and performer beginning with yoga wakes up the muscles by warming them up and creating flexibility in order to begin an intensive modern class. Combining yoga and modern dance helps dancers reach their full potential in technique, flexibility, expression, and overall performance.”

“I’m a fairly beginning student. I studied Bikram yoga and Ashtanga for two years and contemporary dance for seven years mostly in California and now here in Hawai‘i. Yoga exercises were incorporated into modern dance classes in my California studio training mostly as a stretching tool. I appreciate the connections. Similarities between the two are being in tune with the body and allowing for expression through breath. It benefits my overall strength, flexibility, and peace of mind. It’s all about the body: learning, accepting, nurturing, and performing from inside out.”

“This was the very first yoga in modern dance class I’ve taken. I thought that including yoga in dance was helpful in gaining strength and flexibility. Also I think that including yoga helps the dancer connect more wholistically to movement. For my own training, yoga in dance class helps me to center myself and at the same time use my core strength musculature to gain endurance in movement. The premise of both forms of movement are the same me.”

“I enjoy yoga during warmup exercises because it helps relax the body making it easier to warmup and get into the dance combinations. Yoga helps increase balance and concentration in class. I feel yoga in modern dance expands my knowledge of how to become a better dancer.”

“A lot of dancers do yoga to help their technical ability and when you choreograph or teach you incorporate what you know. The similarity between the two practices when they are separate is the emphasis of the mind, centering, and imagination. When yoga is present in modern dance class, it all just seems like dancing to me.”

“Over the past five years I’ve seen an increasing amount of dancers and choreographers incorporate yoga into dance compositions and warm-ups. Yoga helps center dancers as well as direct focus and energy in performance. Both yoga and dance focus on elements of moving from the core center, directing energy, and developing natural gestures or movements.”

“Modern dancers are creative people. We use everything from aerial dance to site-specific work. Yoga is another of these.”

“Yoga has always been incorporated in my modern dance classes. At first I realized it kept me centered and allowed me to forget about my stresses and problems outside the studio. I really have to want to do yoga to receive the full benefits. I believe modern dancers need yoga to help find their core, practice their breathing, and mentally/physically take creative risks. In both practices there is breathing and continuous flow of energy past the limbs. Yoga keeps me calm.”

“I have over 17 years of modern dance training. My yoga practice began in 2004 in a class, then I learned from video, and I also had a personal meditation practice that I continue today. I got into a heavy focus in yoga after having a surgery because it was the only way I could learn to move softly. In my own warmup for teaching I use yoga. In modern dance class it’s a way to stretch and strengthen while preparing the body. It teaches mental focus and a way to be present and in the moment in performance. As a physical practice yoga asana in modern dance allows me to achieve the full range of motion and focus on the larger picture of the experience of moving through the technical execution. It expands my personal performance range. Yoga in a modern dance helps dancers train in a safe environment.”

“A brief description of my yoga background: Bikram yoga, in and out of practice over the past 4 years. Self prep work with puja. Butoh for 15 years. Drag/Theater forever.

Modern for 15 years. And anything else I can try out. Yoga set the space and quickly calms the senses. Focuses! Great for breath and easing into dance. I use it in theater, most know of it, some hate it. The breath. Ahhhhh. Dance is breath. Yoga is breath. Fuel for the body to perform. As a performer it helps me to settle into the practice ahead of time. It also helps me to leave whatever I didn't leave at the door. More people see the benefits of combined practice. People do more yoga outside of dance.”

“It is cool to talk about yoga. It's trendy.”

“It leaves me focused and calm. I can dance more through my body than in my head. I believe the regular breathing exercises are the reason for this.”

I'm sharing the experiences the students wrote about because it is an example of yoga-in-dance participation in a university classroom setting and has shaped my research. Sue Stinson places emphasis on experience through telling stories as a site of research in her article “Research as Choreography” and proposes telling stories as a process of discovery and way of connecting “theory and the sensory/kinesthetic.”^{ccxii} Building on research with her students in university dance education settings, she discusses participant hermeneutics sharing strategies through the story of personal experience. I believe the reason sharing student's responses and embedding them in this context is a valuable research tool because it represents how learning through storytelling may happen in a modern or contemporary dance practice. Not everything is explained in the responses and space for meaning making is offered to a listener or a reader to understand through their own lens and situated knowledge. Language shared through storytelling

experiences of dancers points to a complex multi-layered physical knowledge. The value of sharing experience provides a context in dance practice that connects memory, imagination, and inspiration.

In the questionnaire given out to the students, overall I noticed the dancers perceived the training of yoga-in-dance as a way of conditioning the body, as a way to tone and shape form. Terms that were used to describe experiences included “flexibility” and “physical strength” as well as “waking up the muscles” and “achieving potential in technique” as values that are cultivated. There was also a resonance that the body is more than a physical house, that the body is “learning, accepting, nurturing, and performing from inside out.” One dancer wrote that yoga in a dance class “helps the dancer connect more wholistically to movement” for this group of dancers. The practice of yoga helps with “concentration” and creates a state of “calm.”

Resonance is the vibration of emotion, kinetic empathy, and connection that the dancers had in relation to the physical posture and movement. Dance scholar Jennifer Fisher has discussed resonance as a kind of “sensibility” that a dance community has towards an event.^{ccxiii} In yoga in dance class practices, more is going on than just the performance of a choreographic combination or the execution or presentation of the lines of the body. A practice resonates and embodies the values of the community it participates with and creates situated experiences.

There are parallels of thinking about situated knowledge and perspectives in Nira Yuval-Davis’s work on transversal politics. Davis describes the idea of rooting and shifting in transversal politics as a way of creating a “situation of exchange” between people. Transverse politics is based on the recognition that “from each positioning the world is seen differently, and thus that any knowledge based on just one positioning is ‘unfinished’ – which is not the same as saying it is ‘invalid’.”^{ccxiv} Transversality decenters strategies of rationalization and works with

the possibility of connectivity across several lines of thinking and being. It resists categorization and suggests that there can be a multiplicity of ways of knowing. Through the oral history interviews and classroom study, I came to understand a situation of exchange through the perception of experiences. The artists are rooting in and simultaneously shifting with various movement and philosophical practices, and their individual dance training lineage. In the interviews this situation of exchange included Livingston's movement background in yoga, tai chi, and postmodern dance, Coorlawala's training in hatha yoga, ballet, and modern dance, and the dance studio observations of classes blending of yoga asana and modern dance. The whole body training in these examples includes hybridity in movement techniques. The approach to blending styles is a situation of exchange that creates a connection between diverse movement styles.

In a dance technique class, at whatever point the dancers are in their technical training, I encourage students to come into the classroom with an open mind and without expectations so that they do not limit themselves. I have observed that students who are open and eager take more action to make changes in their progress and physical training. I also encourage students to go beyond the radius of their primary dance practice and cultivate other fields of knowledge or scholarship that interest them so that they can expand their thinking and then relate new ideas to their own a passion for dance research. I start by rooting into my own practice. Yoga has taught me to listen to my gut feelings and to have resonance with my environment. I teach classes with this awareness, and, shift into listening to the multiplicity of movement training backgrounds and approaches each dancer brings. Students are encouraged to do a yoga-in-dance practice for themselves that is compassionate and dialogical.

Resonance is a feature of situated textuality and performativity. It is a way of insisting on process based strategies and creativity that includes a wholistic tactile listening with the body to space, time, energy, and dynamics. In the sense of transversalism and the embodiment of the values of a community dance participates in, resonance involves listening with attention to one another through collaboration. An example of this in dance is the way dancers might make different choices around energy and spatial dynamics in the execution of a movement pattern while still dancing in unison. Dance also connects the body to place and also has the ability to open up the energy of a space. Transversalism as a situation of exchange in dance might also involve the rooting in and sharing of diverse movement vocabularies or genres and experiences through storytelling. Resonance as a journey of performativity encompasses understanding the self in relation to the kinesphere. Journeying encompasses inward and outward focus and perception that can build connections between the self as inner landscape of felt experience and as the kinesphere outside the body.

Observation of Yoga-in-Dance Classes at a Regional American College Dance Festival Association Conference in 2012

In March 2012 I traveled with three University of Hawai‘i college students to the American College Dance Festival Association (ACDFA) conference at California State University, Dominguez Hills.^{ccxv} The emphasis of this festival is to bring together college and university dance departments in twelve regional festivals across the country. For about one full week the dancers have the opportunity to choose from a variety of master classes and perform dance works that are adjudicated by a nationally recognized panel of choreographers, instructors, and artists.

While at ACDFFA, I had the opportunity to participate in and observe several classes. In the mornings a Vinyasa style yoga class was offered as a beginning to the course schedule. In several modern dance classes yoga asana postures were being used as a warm up. For example one class started with several yoga postures including Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward dog), Balasana (child's pose), and Halasana (plough). I noticed that there was no literal saying of the word or introduction to the concept of yoga. Rather the use of postures and naming of them was part of the warmup demonstrated through visual teaching with very few words.

Below is an inclusion of my journal note later after the class.

Monday March 26, 2012 10:30 – Noon

At ACDFFA. Just took a modern dance class. The description the instructor gave of the course was that it was about creating new neuromuscular patterns. The teacher talked about courage, stepping and falling, turning, and launching across.

The first 45 minutes of warmup included yoga asanas such as downward dog, child's pose, and plough. The asanas in combination with the movement opened up something in my reception of the movement. No postures were named.

As I fling myself across the floor upside down in somersaults and backward falls, I contemplate the meaning of the life. My experience is heightened awareness, freedom, and flight. The teacher says, "Reconnect the dancing body in the fall." With all this big movement, the fine details of extended feet and specificity of dance technique details are moved over, swallowed up by the sheer force and momentum of the movement. The meaning I make of this is that it is like the momentum of the internet and technology. The sheer force of cultures colliding and ideas flowing is like an unstoppable wave

cresting and crashing against the shoreline. Bodies of knowledge smashing up against each other.

The ideas are flowing.

Across the wooden floor.

Rows of mirrors at the front reflecting self.

Music – music is on an apple computer playing back a beat at the table with speakers.

Yoga posture is present. But without a name. ^{ccxvi}

Yoga is beneath the surface of visibility in many of the dance classes at ACDFFA. By visibility I mean verbal identification. What I notice is that the movement postures are being demonstrated and incorporated into the warmup stretches and exercises without being named. In some cases the postures are shown in silence and other times there are verbal cues like “stretch your hands on the floor beneath your shoulders” and “extend the body in an upside down V.” They flow very naturally from one gesture to another in the training of the body. I notice in this particular class that the yoga postures used in the warmup are incorporated into the choreographic phrases that are given as combinations across the floor. This is a connectivity and progression from floor work and warmup into the full class so I feel there is a flow from beginning to end in the grammar of the movement. Yoga in this class is a presence that does not seem to yet take a seat or center stage in the presentation of it.

I spoke with one of the morning yoga instructors at ACDFFA who is a college professor and also teaches modern dance classes. I asked the instructor why they thought dance classes are sometimes using identifications for ballet steps and modern principles of motion, but not the specificities of names for hatha yoga. The response was the following:

I have used hatha yoga postures for years in my modern dance classes but by calling them by other names like upside down V. I came up with names that were descriptive of movement without assuming prior student knowledge of hatha yoga language. But about a year and a half ago, I started calling the postures by their Sanskrit names because I realized that the students began to know these terms prior to coming into class. The dancers came into the class having already been exposed to some form of hatha yoga. I knew that because in talking with the students, terms became just as common as kick or jumps or turns. ^{cxxvii}

My point in sharing this experience at the ACDFFA Festival is to recognize the value of naming yoga with Sanskrit terminology is one way of honoring heritage. Now that dancers in the U.S. often know hatha yoga terminology as they are entering dance classes, it is possible to utilize yoga language in dance technique, whereas before its associations with popular culture, new age mysticism, and cultural appropriation might have put people off. The blending of yoga in dance practices is happening more frequently because dancers are going to hatha yoga classes for professional training and conditioning. If we can start naming yoga-in-dance, this opens up a space for a way of talking about the dense ecology it enables. This includes encouraging ways that ask for respect and interaction, as well as enabling an understanding of the history of yoga's spiritual heritage. Exploring yoga-in-dance heritage as a fluid process that shifts over time gives value to recognizing that each person and dance community has a different relation to the practice and creates agency for past and present to be together simultaneously in choreography, performances and training. The closing section of this chapter examines ethical approaches to a

history of institutionalized cultural bias in dance department structures in colleges and universities in the U.S. and offers suggestions for structural change.

Yoga-in-Dance Performance

As I researched different ways yoga and dance were working alongside or together in dance classes and performance, I asked what are some different ways of looking at this mixing of form? Is the blended class training that appears in choreographic work and performances about cultural hybridity, diaspora identities, or the changing of tradition? Or is it a process that is abstractly about kinesthetic form, structure, movement, and the body. I believe the answer is both/and all at the same time. On one hand, a look at the blending of yoga and dance involves cultural issues. And sometimes it is purely the technical aspects of a technique class or the artistic vision of choreography about shape and form through yoga posture sequences.

Culturally the idea of abstract modern and contemporary dance can be placed within modernism in that modernity and modernism are linked to European and U.S. structures. What I want to argue here is that thinking about the mixing of yoga from India and modern dance from Europe and the U.S. creates tension and an open fertile landscape for thinking about heritage and institutionalized cultural bias in art practices, dance classes, and choreography, and, at the same limits the possibility for thinking of artists as creators of physical form. Yoga-in-dance is a plural practice. Because modern and contemporary dance are often a non-verbal art form, the potential for interpretation is vast. The kinesthetic intelligence of the artist or teacher presenting the work, whether issue based or abstract, is what I focus on here.

Some of the ways I have experienced yoga incorporated into choreography in performance: one is through the inclusion of yoga asana in the movement, the other is more

subtle and includes the incorporation of a yoga philosophy that may be signaled in a title and explored through different dance styles, or simply part of a choreographer's practice that then becomes subtly woven into ideas that are behind the work.

In June 2014 Savion Glover presented "OM" at the Joyce Theater in Manhattan. This performance is an example of how philosophical ideas from yoga may be incorporated into performance works. The influence of yoga is also extending into other dance styles like jazz and tap work as well. The *New York Times* account "A Mystical Offering of Grateful Devotion" describes the performance as divided into three sections including "The Offeringz," "The Prayers," and "The Resolutionz."^{ccxviii} The show began with music titled "Calling", with a stage set full of candles, and images of "Sammy Davis Jr., Gregory Hines, Jimmy Slyde, Gandhi, and Michael Jackson." In his press release, Glover stated, "Because of my relationship to the dance and how it relates to spirituality, I'm hoping through this production of 'Om,' the audience will understand the importance of the divine – ONE."^{ccxix} This is an example of a subtle incorporation of mantra and yoga philosophy signaled in a title and explored through thematic elements of audio and visual design in a show.

Two examples of the use of asana in contemporary dance includes Philip Askew and Lydia Walker's "Variations on Surya Namaskara" and Navtej Johar's "Dravya Kaya." Both are a sequence of fluidly choreographed asana gestures set to music. There is no traditional yoga sequence used in the movement, rather the movements appear to poetically reference the grammar of yoga. I saw these works via internet performances. So I write about them in a different time and space than they were originally performed and through the lens of a screen. The videos being analyzed are a third generation experience of an event. The first generation were the live performances. The second generation is a flat recorded video documentation of the

performance. My review comes from digital media that has been compressed and uploaded to youtube. The video performance is site specific in that it is housed on youtube and is now seen through how the camera has chosen to direct what is viewed through the viewfinder.

“Variations on Surya Namaskar” was performed in a small studio on November 22, 2008 as part of the Columbia Ballet Collaborative’s Fall Show in New York City. Askew is a yoga instructor in New York City and Walker was trained at the School of American Ballet and is one of the founders of the Columbia Ballet Collaborative (CBC).^{ccxx} The music for the piece is improvisational piano played by Jonah Rank.

The five minute youtube video documentation^{ccxxi} of the dance is a single camera shot that shows the back of the pianist settling into his seat at a grand piano and then slowly pans right to see the duet enter the studio space. The youtube video stage is framed by overhead hanging fluorescent golden lights. This yellowish light washes the entire space in a glow. In the background behind the dancers is an exit sign and door, an upright piano, and a fire extinguisher on the wall. The performers are wearing exercise clothing. Askew is wearing a brown shirt and grey sweats and Walker sports a camisole leotard with flesh tone tights and her hair pulled tight in a bun. Both are barefoot. The program notes on the youtube screen indicate that at the time I am viewing this dance, there have been 708,634 people who have seen the performance. That is many more audience members than could possibly fit inside this small room.

The dance begins with Askew huddled in child’s pose on the floor, and Walker draped over him, her hands on top of his. The sound of the piano is melancholy. Askew’s initial gesture is to brush Walker’s hands in a sweeping gesture across the floor and then he lifts them both as he opens into a table top position on hands and knees. As the movement fluidly and slowly moves through different asanas, the two dancers never part. Some part of their body is always

connected as they change places with who is in front or back of the movement. There is a giving and receiving of tension and resistance in their gestures. The dance begins in a tight ball and ends with both dancers lying flat on the floor. The form has opened up, with the ballet trained dancer on top of the yoga trained artist as the support underneath. The work appears to be about an interplay in the qualities of movement styles, form and structure, and the shape of the different styles of contemporary dance and yoga having a conversation together in performance.

Navtej Johar's dance "Dravya Kaya"^{ccxxii} is a duet "based on select props from the Ramayana" where "dravya means object and kaya is body, i.e. object/body."^{ccxxiii} The dance is fifteen minutes long and also exists on youtube and Johar's website. The video editing is by Anshul at K.D. Studio. A portion of the work was originally performed for the Natya Kala Conference at the Sri Krishna Gana Sabha in Chennai in December 2008. The choreography is by Johar and performed by Sudeep Kumar and Johar. The musical composition is by G. Elangovan and features tamboura and male vocals. At the time that I viewed the site, the youtube counter indicated 1,495 people had viewed the performance online.

Navtej Johar is a Bharatanatyam choreographer and performer who is also a student of Patanjali yoga at the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram in Chennai. His website indicates that he "freely merges asana, pranayama, visualization, meditation, and Vedic chanting"^{ccxxiv} in his work. He does both classical Bharatanatyam and contemporary performance pieces. Johar founded "Studio Abhyas" based in South Delhi in 2001. Studio Abhyas offers classes in yoga and school and college dance theater workshops.

I watched the performance of the video online before reading the program notes. Like "Variations on Surya Namaskar," there was a duet sequence of poetic asana postures that opened the first half of the recording and then were woven throughout. The scene opens with two male

dancers silhouetted in blue light on a black stage. As the light brightens Johar and Kumar are revealed wearing white lungi pants. They begin an asana sequence facing one another that eventually continues to evolve with bharatanatyam choreography. While the postures flow fluidly from the ground to the floor, there is a tension in the gestures. The program notes on the company's webpage indicate that the work "is an attempt to reclaim or rather, reinvent Rama by entering his story through the neutral agency of objects."^{ccxxv} This performance is an avant garde approach to blending yoga asana and bharatanatyam dance that moves into a personal territory of expression and away from codified systems of choreography.

Ketu Katrak interviews Johar in her book *Contemporary Indian Dance: New Creative Choreography in India*. She presents an ethnography of several choreographers and artist creating new work in India and the Diaspora, and, discusses current innovations and features a vast array of different approaches that artists are taking. She suggests that Johar's work is "deeply devotional" and that he works "on the margins" through his exploration of different dance styles and practices such as bharatanatyam, yoga, and street theater.^{ccxxvi} Johar trained at Kalakshetra in Chennai, India as well as spending nine years in Michigan professionally with modern dance companies. For Johar, definitions of tradition and contemporary work are in a continuous process of redefining.

In addition to viewing yoga in modern dance performances for this study, I also attended a classical Odissi dance concert called "Yoga in Dance," an hour long performance by the Rudrukrakya Foundation Institute of Art and Dance touring from the state of Orissa and presented at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) on June 18, 2014 in Los Angeles, California. Prior to this performance, the Odissi dance concerts I had seen have never mentioned yoga. Even though my primary focus in this dissertation is modern dance in the U.S.,

I was curious why the concert was being presented as yoga. The evening featured four dances choreographed by Artistic Director Guru Bichitrananda Swain and performed by dancers Sarita Mishra, Sanjukta Dutta Pradhan, Manisha Manaswini, Lingaraj Pradhan, Amulya Kumar Balabantray, Abhaya Kumar Parida, Rashmi Ranjan Barik, Samir Kumar Panigrahi. Music included recorded vocals and the instrumentation of punkawaj (drum), veena (stringed instruments), and flute.^{ccxxvii} The advertisement for the performance offered the following description of the performance:

Odissi dance like yoga has the ultimate goal of moksha or spiritual liberation. Like the practice of yoga the learning of classical dance is one of intense sadhana (spiritual discipline) that demands complete physical and mental concentration. Woven into the dance repertoire will be demonstrations of hatha and raja yoga with its mastery of the physical body and intense mental focus.^{ccxxviii}

Odissi is one of the eight recognized forms of classical dance in India and is part of a process of reconstruction and revival. Part of the Odissi practice is the tradition of 16th century gotipua dance where male dancers played both masculine and feminine roles in dance performance.^{ccxxix} Part of Artistic Director Guru Bichitrananda Swain's focus is in empowering male dancers to perform and creating choreographies that would feature their "strength and vigor."^{ccxxx} The touring company was equally male and female.

The dance program notes included references to descriptions of how yoga was being incorporated into the body of choreographic work from both a postural and aesthetic perspective. The opening dance, "Surya Stutee Mangalacharan" was described to "involve the passionate

devotion which is the essence of bhakti yoga.^{»ccxxxix} This was a dance for four male dancers. Throughout the work a blending of asana was incorporated into the movement. The dancers began with an offering to the murti of Lord Jaganath downstage left and followed this gesture by performing a series of Surya Namaskara (sun salutations) in a circle. With hands in Namaste mudra, a bright projection of a multi-colored red and orange sun lit the cyc behind them. The second item “Chanarika Kamodi Pallavi” was more abstract. The program suggested that “If hatha yoga is the mastery of the physical body and coordination, then a pallavi which means flowering or elaboration of form and rhythm can be seen as a highly advanced form of this yoga.”^{»ccxxxix} Based on the Nritya or pure dance form of Odissi, the dance was performed by three couples, each with a male and female performing duet. The music and dance started with the same raga and beat and then was elaborated on through rhythmic gestures as the choreography unfolded. “Sumudita Madane – Abhinaya” was a dance that featured storytelling through nava rasa. The program notes indicated “It allows the audience to experience the transformation of internal chemistry which essential in both yoga and Ayurveda.”^{»ccxxxix} An abhinaya is generally a dance that expresses a song or poem. This performance between a trio of dancers was based on the Radha Krishna theme from the 12th century poet Jayadeva Gita Govinda. The focus of expression was about eternal love. The intention of the final work “Taal Tarang” had the intention of “moksha: spiritual liberation”^{»ccxxxix} described as a yogic way to bring the performer and audience into a state of freedom through dance.

After the performance I had the opportunity to talk with one of the main producers of the company Pratap Das via phone. Das shared that in the process of preparing and planning for the dance tour, the planning committee that was comprised of organizers, scholars, and dancers were brainstorming how to generate media for a U.S. audience.

As an organizer I was thinking let's explore some of the things that Odissi has that are not usually explored or reinvented again. One of our committee members came up with this idea of yoga and dance. Yoga is a popular concept and so helpful and healthy it takes care of people and spiritual harmony. The Orissi dance has evolved with yogic postures. We thought this would be a great idea to get yogic practitioners to also come and see our dance. We knew the Odissi fans would come because they will be familiar anyway, let's get some new crowds to the show to see how the postures and different asanas are already in the dance and the dancers practice every day. Yoga, yes it came from India, but it doesn't only belong to India anymore it belongs to everybody who believes in it and practices it. ^{ccxxxv}

Das went on to say that the yoga asana in the dances performed have been part of the choreography and repertoire for many years. He recalled seeing the opening dance "Surya Stutee Mangalacharan" in 1993 in Bangalore. "At that time the performers announced that the dance has many yogic postures but they weren't trying to catch a yoga crowd, they were just doing it." ^{ccxxxvi} The company's future goals are to develop an educational lecture demonstration series about yoga in dance that will accompany the performances on tour.

The previous concert descriptions offer a few ways yoga is incorporated into performance. Philip Askew and Lydia Walker's "Variations on Surya Namaskara" and Navtej Johar's "Dravya Kaya" include yoga asana in movement. Savion Glover's tap show "OM" at the Joyce Theater in Manhattan is an example of how a choreographer's practice of yoga philosophy becomes subtly woven into ideas that are behind the work. The Rudrukrakysa

Foundation Institute of Art and Dance “Yoga in Dance” concert explores how the incorporation of a yoga philosophy may be signaled in a title and explored philosophically through movement.

These examples of performances explore a hybrid training of yoga and dance that emerges as stylistic choice in choreographic works. The kinesthetic intelligence of the artist or teacher presenting the work, whether issue based or abstract, is the focus.

Perspectives in Educational Environments and Performance Practice

Fluid alternatives that mark these close readings of yoga-in-dance might include an openness to placing value on different ways of being and knowing in practice, encouraging more research that focuses on the process orientation of dance making and audience perception, and approaches to process oriented education in the study of dance scholarship. An application of Hunter’s theory of “disunified aesthetics” creates space for differing notions of “tradition” and “authenticity” in yoga in dance practices to be understood in training, in performance, and in social settings through a “situated” perspective of dance teacher, performer, choreographer, student, or audience participant. These differing points of departure can be seen in the way schools like Ailey are offering classes in hybrid “Tapas Yoga” and “Afro Flow Yoga” and performers and choreographers like Livingston and Coorlawala are remixing movement styles.

An ethical approach is to become more aware and look at ways to reform training and educational systems in dance learning environments, studios and at the university level. From the perspective of modern dance as “masking” yoga and other dance styles, modern dancers today can become more educated in the ways that diverse practices such as yoga have historically worked alongside or blended with to create hybridity. Currently institutional cultural biases are part of many dance department structures in colleges and universities in the U.S. Often in

university dance programs, dance genres other than modern or ballet are electives and do not receive the same weight in terms of number of required credit hours. An institutionalized bias towards Eurocentric ballet and American-centric modern dance is privileged in the tier of core course requirements. The cultural prejudice and discrimination is at the level of abstraction in degree requirements. Prejudice is often an attitude or understanding based on limited information that can be seen in the way modern dance has rhetorically incorporated other movement practices. Discrimination is a behavior which controls access to decision making and to resources. Making structural change could include establishing a core curriculum that includes other dance genres and perspectives as a requirement for degrees and as a program major. Using language specific terminology including Sanskrit yoga posture names that identifies differences in a hybrid movement practice also generates more awareness of the dense ecology of yoga in dance heritage.

From an educational approach, striving to make dance history, theory, and movement classes process oriented by inviting artists to present different points of view of their practice and teach movement sessions is a way to reflect, engage, create, and share knowledge. While there might not always be yoga-in-dance practitioners in a local community, using video chat technologies to telematically bring in artists for a somatic or conversation sharing session with the students is another process oriented pedagogical approach. Hunter proposes that the notion of “Until” presents a moment of opportunity. “Until: what has not been said is made present, and then we have a choice.”^{ccxxxvii} Alternatives for placing value on different ways of being and knowing are present in the moment of choice in how we flow with and structure yoga-in-dance practices.

Another alternative is to reflect on heritage and authenticity as living and breathing in the moment rather than static or fixed in any one practice. Reflecting on the possibility of a “disunified aesthetics”^{ccxxxviii}, of multiple perspectives in time and space that do not have to be connected or perceived as a binary paradigm and have a unique resonance in each point of departure or connectivity. The authenticity of experience of what is presented as yoga-in-dance means different things to different people and changes through innovation. Approaching heritage as a fluid process that shifts over time gives value to recognizing that each person and dance community has a different relation to the practice and creates agency for past and present to be together simultaneously in choreography, performances and training. Additionally viewing yoga-in-dance as an ongoing creative process situates the moment of now through an individual lens of understanding and emerging perception, and encourages scholars and artists to write more about practice and process. While practice is informed by, situated in, and active in creating culture/history, a lot of work has been done in creating rhetorical strategies for how this happens. Less work has been done in the artistic/aesthetic/process knowledge that practice cultivates such as creating a compassionate space for dance teachers, performers, and choreographers to reflect on yoga-in-dance practice and to value experience.

This question was recently asked of me “Tell me where do you stand when you make something visible again?” Yoga-in-dance practices are right in front of us - above, below, around, and within the dancing body in modern dance training techniques. How we are trained to see or understand the history of how yoga is incorporated is dependent on each person’s situated perspective. What is at stake are discourses of political, social, and economic dance narratives that have been oppressed. As dance teachers, art makers, and scholars we also have an ethical and critical responsibility to address institutionalized cultural bias that involves canon issues and

research methodologies as well as institutionalized racism in the forms of student and faculty diversity. This chapter is talking about invisibilization and re-visibility of yoga asana and philosophy in dance. If we make visible again we are choosing the lost bits of what is being lost to be re-visible. As a choreographer and teacher I recognize that I am a person who is choosing both when I blend yoga and dance, and when I look for traces of connectivity to yoga philosophy and technique from past dance teachers and choreographers to write or teach about. My position is situated through the lens of how yoga has entered into the conversation and journey of my story. What I propose is that what we, as dancers with yoga embedded in our training, can do on a very practical level is work more openly and with more awareness with what we know through states of openness, knowing, reception, growth, and re-shaping.

On a bodily level, my position is that everything is temporal and in a constant state of change. I recall *New York Times* dance critic Jack Anderson once told me that whenever he goes to a concert to see a choreography for a second time, he never sees the same dance twice. Dance is an ephemeral form. It does not replicate the same exact and specific shape in time and space more than once. Modern dance has historically been focused on the value of innovation. In the process of doing so, it has stolen, swallowed, and collaborated with other philosophical and movement traditions like yoga. From my perspective, making something visible, if that something or community practicing it wishes to be so, builds a spirit of reciprocity. Making something visible builds a recognition that various yoga practices have been incorporated into dance and through acknowledging this gives back to the tradition by conditioning our eyes to see a yoga presence in dance technique and choreography. Making visible opens our ears to listen more deeply to dance stories of how yoga has entered the dance journey, and to be specific in the articulation of how each one of us is situated differently in our understanding of historical,

social, cultural, and bodily formations of yoga-in-dance. Through this process of looking at dance and listening to stories, there is the potential to become more deeply aware of how yoga has worked alongside and continues to have an ongoing resonance in dance discourse, to recognize in the stories of dance rhetoric and narratives that there are voices of artists and yoga practitioners who were and are socially and culturally situated in inequitable power relations, and to continue to explore more deeply putting the wisdom of the dancing body center stage in our current scholarship.

CHAPTER FIVE

A PERSONAL JOURNEY: DANCING YOGA

My purpose in this chapter is to suggest a working performance as research theory and offer an autoethnographic account of the creative process in the choreography and video of a live stage performance that includes projection design. This study presents a dance piece and the space in which it was created and performed through “practice-based research methodologies, laboratory exploration, and a range of traditional, tacit, and embodied knowledge, with history, theory, and criticism”^{ccxxxix} under the rubric of Lynette Hunter’s Practice as Research models of inquiry. In the sense that this research surveys the landscape of autobiography, I follow the lines of Catherine Russell’s identification of the ethnographic mode of self representation where the artist “understands his or her personal history to be implicit in larger social formations and historical processes.”^{ccxli} This chapter focuses on the creation of performance opening out ten topics including: Place, Creative Process as Performance, The Research Performance Project, Spanda and Accumulation, Bhakti as Felt Memory, Generation and Response Strategies, Meditation and Breathing, Choreography/Improvisation, Video Projection Design, and Public Performance Engaging Audience Practices. Each of these themes explores elements of yoga.

The departing point for this journey is place. How place shapes process. And how the vibration of creative impulse, spanda, emerges from these spaces. The through line that runs throughout the chapter is that place is relational to the emergence of spanda which is 1) central to generation and response strategies in collaboration with environment, other performance makers, and with the audience; 2) also central to the experience of bhakti in the creative process; 3) integral to meditation in choreography; and 3) a subtle motivator in video projection design.

Place

The place is Hawai‘i, specifically the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in the Mānoa valley near the crossroads of Dole and University Streets on the island of Oahu. The place is California, particularly the area that encompasses the La Jolla Cove ecological preserve and kelp beds in the city of San Diego. The place is the Pacific ocean and the waters that lap the shores of Oahu and California. The place is my heart. The place is my practice of yoga. The place is my body and subtle being. My body is land. The place is a collaborative We where I is understood as We in the reflection of memory, ancestors, land, sea, sky, you, me, us as everything the small I create emerges from within and without of the big We portal of life giving flow. The We is not universalized. This We I express through the lens of my own localized experiences and understanding in creative process. The place of this collaborative We is a sense of being in and relating to self, community and environment.



Figure 5.1: Mānoa Valley, Oahu ^{ccxi}

I encounter the creative process from a sense of I/We. This encounter happens in a place within myself. Through the lens of yogic practice I understand the self to contain both Shiva and Shakti principles, to have both feminine and masculine energies. This understanding comes out

of Tantric philosophy where “everything in the universe is thought to be born out of a union of opposites, the interaction of the kinetic female consciousness (Shakti) with the formless male consciousness (Shiva).”^{ccxlii} In this thinking, consciousness is perceived as emerging from the polar principles of Shiva-Shakti and “envisioned as mutually interdependent.”^{ccxliii} In day to day life I embrace the masculine and feminine and in creative practice both are vital to the creation of a new work. In this chapter when I refer to I, I mean We, the interplay and identification of masculine and feminine aspects within.



Figure 5.2: University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Campus^{ccxliv}

I come from Indiana from an area with rolling hills, limestone quarries, lots of farmland, and auto factory workers. My ancestors are German, Swiss, English, Irish, and Native American. My mother is a feminist and my father a musician. Both are ministers in a liberal Protestant church. I grew up dancing in celebrations of many life rituals including weddings, funerals, and Christian religious holiday celebrations like Christmas and Easter. In my adult years I have danced professionally on numerous occasions in many sacred interfaith Jewish, Christian, and Yoga ritual events as well as secular performances. I have lived an almost equal amount of time

in New York and California. At the writing of this dissertation, I have lived three years on Oahu. All of these places, life experiences, family, friends, and colleagues, are part of informing my understanding of creative process.



Figure 5.3: Kāneʻohe, Oahu. A site where footage for *Ocean's Motion* was filmed. ^{cxxlv}

Creative Process as Performance

For me understanding place is central to creative process in performance. In this section I examine creative process because the strategies for making and rehearsal in my collaborative practice with others and environment inform public performance. This includes four areas of practice: pre-rehearsal preparation, the development of choreography, the creation of video design, and public performance as a way of engaging audiences.

Doreen Massey's notion that "space is an ongoing production"^{cxxlvi} resonates in the notion of place as a fluid creative process. In her book "For Space" Massey manages to describe the idea that space is braided with time in such a way that is not a static entity. This also resonates in

the sites and locations of creative process. The creative process is very circular. I am a lifelong learner, constantly growing, and expanding a radius of understanding in the world. My position in the realm of art making activity is constantly shifting and I have worn many different hats as a dancer, choreographer, performer, dance filmmaker, educator, supportive audience member, and newly emerging scholar. My first love is dance and everything else radiates out as an extension of this passion. I approach creating work as a practice. By that I mean that the process of choreographing dance or editing video informs and is part of my sense of being in and relating to self, community and environment. Making art is a way of life for me. Each project begins as an unknown journey that eventually leads to a new place of some sort of change and discovery. There are not always clear directions to follow so the pathway involves transformation and openness in a perception about what is possible. In each step along the way I listen to intuition, body, physical place, and collaborators. I see the fruition of a project, the presentation of a dance or the screening of a dance film, as a temporal part of a larger whole. The creative process is the performance and any particular project that marks the edges of the practice in time and space is a continuous “ongoing production” of a series of containers for life experience that I can revisit for inspiration, research, and evaluation.



Figure 5.4: Lanikai, Oahu ^{ccxlvi}

This chapter looks holistically at creative process as performance in the creation of an hour long production called *Ocean's Motion* presented in April 2012. The close reading of the creative process and critical evaluation of the PaR project examines the notion of Spanda in yoga theory as discussed by Mark S.G. Dyczkowski in the *Stanzas on Vibration*, a translation and commentary of the Indian Kashmiri Saiva text the *Spandakarika*^{ccxlviii}, and how this could be read in dialogue with the collaborative based strategies and creation of making dance and video projection. My creative process incorporated breathing, meditation, and yoga asana in the somatic development of the dance choreography and an experimentation with yoga philosophy in the creative process of developing the projection design.

The analysis examines the accumulation of written, photo, and video journals in the creative spaces of pre-production, production, and post, as well as a close reading of my experiences choreographing and editing the projection design with Final Cut Pro. I compare the shooting/editing experiences to the dancing/choreographic process because my dance background influences creative choice making in video, and, because I write this document with

a modern and contemporary dance community and audience in mind. The result has been a reflective mechanism that assists in the articulation of creative processes and an autoethnographic model of research for thinking through connectivity between the making of performance and understanding the formation of self. This chapter includes a description of the making of the live performance and video projection artwork and a critical evaluation in the context of spanda theory. The inclusion of entries from my process journal are excerpted throughout and incorporated in full in Appendix A.

Using the label autoethnography is a paradox as it muddles the colonialist notions of the ethnographic practice of othering. In this study the perspective in the description of the artwork and the critical content comes from a specific positionality and does not represent the viewpoints of my colleagues in the creative process. The interpretations and potential shortcomings of the analysis are filtered through my own lens and could be possibly conceived of “a form of what James Clifford calls ‘self fashioning’, in which the ethnographer comes to represent himself as a fiction.”^{ccxlix} In this regard, the dance studio as a research lab is an interesting site of investigation for analyzing “what is at stake in such locations.”^{cci} In her article “Labs/Studios” in *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research* Shannon Rose Riley asks “How does the studio frame the artist as a lone genius and situate his or her space outside of society – not dissimilar to the ivory tower academic, both romanticized notions of genius?”^{cccli} With this thought in mind, this chapter is in no way written to imply that this creative pathway is the only way, or that this process is elite. Quite the contrary my PaR work is modest and much of my artistic work is relatively unknown. What I am interested in thinking through is connectivity and impulse. Connectivity in artistic endeavors and project occurrences don't always seem to be connected on the surface. I find though that there is usually a thread that links ideas whether

visible or not. This includes ideas that rise to the surface through rushes of creative energy and impulse in the actualization of making dance and video design and ideas that emerge from experiences in the creative process in locations that are culturally and socially constituted in dance studios, filming sites, and in performance.

The Research Performance Project - *Ocean's Motion*

Ocean's Motion was a live performance presented as a premiere for the annual dance concert in the Department of Theatre and Dance, and, for Theatre for Young Audiences at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (U.H.M.) Kennedy Theatre Mainstage April 20, 21, 27, 28, 29 2012.^{ccli} The show featured thirty six dancers and culminated in a series of performances that reached over one thousand audience members over the course of three weeks. My role was to co-direct the performance with Amy Schiffner, U.H.M. Associate Professor, choreograph alongside Schiffner and Kumu Vicky Holt Takamine, U.H.M. Faculty and Founder of the Pua Ali'i 'Ilima hālau hula (Hawaiian dance school) and PA'I Foundation, and serve as video projection designer for the show. Lighting designer Asuka Endo teamed up with scenic designer Meg Hanna to create the lighting and set designs for this three act dance theater. Aaron Huisenfeldt, a composer from San Diego, was commissioned to create an original digital music score. Costume designer Cheri Vasek, U.H.M. Assistant Professor, and puppet designer Morgan Lane-Tanner collaboratively created underwater sea creature costumes for the dancers and actors. The production was part of a longer two hour family friendly evening concert directed by Dr. Betsy Fisher, U.H.M. Professor, that included additional choreography by faculty including "Water Colors" by Fisher, "Slippery When Wet" by Peggy Gaither Adams, U.H.M. Professor,

“Daughters of the Sea” by Gregg Lizenbery, U.H.M. Professor, and “Te Moana” by Dr. Jane Freeman Moulin, U.H.M. Professor.



Figure 5.5: Logo for the Production ^{ccliii}

The production of *Ocean's Motion* was funded and made possible with support from the Waikiki Aquarium, Hanahau'oli School, Iona Contemporary Dance Theatre, U.H.M. Women's Campus Club, Student Activity Program Fee Board, the Hung Wo and Elizabeth Lau Ching Foundation, and The Waikiki Parc Hotel.^{ccliv} The show received the Hawai'i State Po'okela award for best choreography.^{cclv}

Generation, Response, and Collaboration Strategies: Theorizing Modes of Creativity

The motion of consciousness is a creative movement, a transition from the uncreated state of being to the created state of becoming. In this sense, being is in a state of perpetual becoming (satatodita); it constantly phenomenalisises into finite expression.^{cclvi}

There are two modes that I work in when creating new work in dance or film. I consider these to be a generating mode and a responsive mode. Both are states of creative “becoming” and

were at play in the development of *Ocean's Motion*. These modes are not fixed spaces or methods, rather they are always shifting or “phenomenalizing into,” and there is fluidity between them in the place of creative process. Sometimes the modes happen separately, other times they occur simultaneously. The generating mode comes from an impulse, spanda. Spanda will be discussed in depth in the next section. The responsive mode comes from listening and contemplative reflection. Both modes are cyclical and circular and in the moment of time of writing this text and living in Hawai‘i for only a few months, the most isolated land mass in the world, I was thinking a lot about the meaning of place in relation to how movement forms, costume choices, and projection textures might come into being.

Doreen Massey, in her essay “A Global Sense of Place,” envisions an alternative interpretation of place as “constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus.”^{cclvii} Her distinction of place as being the possibility for something that “integrates in a positive way the global and the local” helped me think through the multiplicity of influences, social and cultural constructions, dance training, and sense of self I had present in my own thinking as I was forming this new project and listening to the spanda of creativity. For me, place is not limited by the boundaries of a geographical location defined by a nation. Place is a space within my understanding that is formed by the intersection of the multiplicity of spaces I have lived in, my sense of spirituality, and the construction of influences brought to me from my ancestors, my family, friends, and colleagues. This sense of place within me is strong yet always changing as I continue to learn and grow.

For Massey, the connection people make to the notion of place varies widely. “If it is now recognized that people have multiple identities then the same point can be made in relation to places. Moreover, such multiple identities can either be a source of richness or a source of

conflict, or both.”^{cclviii} As I began to more deeply see and listen to the place of Hawai‘i and perspectives about the appropriation of native lands, culture, tradition, and language, engage in conversations with people about indigenous identity and colonization, and read about the history of Hawaiian sovereignty, I began to question myself about how I could contribute creatively to a new choreography on the island as an outsider from a sense of cultural and social place. The power and privilege of my job as a university professor and issues of whiteness mark these questions as well. This was and is a struggle for me and continues to be a place of learning different ways of honoring place and creative freedom in the context of the University of Hawai‘i. Because I am deeply interested in the vibration of silence, forms that heighten awareness to being present in the moment, and acts of listening, wherever I create, I engage and collaborate with images from a sense of place. Movement imagery and visual designs are inspired by feelings in the natural and urban world. In Hawai‘i I was listening to my body, the dance studio, the ocean, sky, and wind to cultivate the ideas for *Ocean’s Motion*. What emerged in my being was to respect and be grateful for this opportunity to be a guest of the people and land, ‘aina, of Hawai‘i and to create out of the spiritual sense of place that is within me internally in relation to the multiplicity of experiences that have constructed my life. I have a relational accountability: involving myself, my yoga practice and community, family and friends, my employment including colleagues and students, the place where I live, the culture and people who inhabit this space, the natural environment, and the web of relationships from other places in my life that factor into this.

Shawn Wilson’s book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* examines research paradigms that helped me think through non-linear logic in meaning making and writing about creative process. He uses “two voices” that include differing perspectives between current

dominant cultures and indigenous research methodologies. The two voices are storytelling and non-linear thinking. Here I refer to ‘non-linear’ thinking as basically logical thinking that does not use rational logic but strategies such as metaphorical or symbolic logic. These voices are blended throughout and utilize personal experience as the basis for understanding relationality. In this text he summarizes various scholars work based on ideas of “respect, reciprocity, and responsibility” that I think resonates with valuing knowledge through sharing the wisdom of experiences both in yoga, dance making, and in practice as research approaches to oral history, storytelling and interpretation of information. Wilson discusses an intuitive and non-linear approach to ‘research as ceremony’, to knowledge making where various elements are acknowledged and relationships are constructed until a new understanding or awareness emerges.

Accountability is built into the relationships that are formed in storytelling within an oral tradition. As a storyteller, I am responsible for who I share information with as well as for ensuring that it is shared in an appropriate way, at the right place and time. In receiving the story, you as an active listener are responsible for putting the story into a relational context that makes sense for you and for listening with an open heart and open mind. If you choose to pass along the story or my words, you also take on the responsibilities of the storyteller yourself. The relationships we all build with an Indigenous research paradigm shape and redefine the concept. In your joint ownership of this concept, you are also accountable for how you use it. ^{cclix}

In this sense research and the dissemination of research is an ongoing collaboration that requires conscious awareness towards the sharing of knowledge: within my own creative engagement over the chronological time of my research (which is a lifelong pursuit), with the co-creators of the performance at the center of this dissertation, and with the readers of this written research. This holistic approach considers storytelling as a process that examines and interprets information in the building of relationships. Non-linear thinking has allowed me to include divergent ideas and approaches that are just as likely to be dissimilar as similar to each other, and help to articulate the non-discursive bases for the diverse elements of the lives of my collaborators. As I write this dissertation, I hope that I am showing appropriate levels of “respect, reciprocity, and responsibility” with those to whom I am accountable.

The subsequent sections of this chapter presents the ‘two voices’ of a non-linear approach and storytelling style to to explore my practice as a research experience. This research examines how I understand the practice of yoga influenced my participation in relation to the production of *Ocean’s Motion* through the notion of place and modes of generating and responding in creative process. I start with a discussion of Spanda and Accumulation in the preparation phases of gathering ideas and materials, then outline various breathing and meditation techniques that were a part of developing the choreography, followed by ways that yoga philosophy inspired the video projection design.

Spanda and Accumulation

The creation of *Ocean’s Motion* took a year to develop. Before I examine the nuts and bolts of the physical dance and video design making, I focus on an analysis of where ideas for the work were bubbling up in the creative process in relation to the place of the subtle and

physical body. The point is to make connections between moments of clarity where spanda burst forth in a stream of consciousness thinking and how these creative impulses were then accumulated somatically into my contribution towards the actual final performance work. This section is a reflection on yoga practices in the pre-rehearsal development of my contribution to the choreography and visual design. What is developed below is a discussion of spanda in relation to a Kashmir Shaivism view of the body and somatics. This is followed by examples of shared experiences of spanda emerging in a personal creative process of gathering movement and visual ideas for performance through meditation, journaling, reading poetry, and chanting while dancing in community.



Figure 5.6: Kāne‘ohe, Oahu. A site where footage for *Ocean’s Motion* was filmed. ^{cclx}

I first encountered the notion of spanda in my meditation and chanting practices. I recall hearing instructors share that how sound moves in the body during chanting, how the breath moves through the body in meditation, or how the wind interacts with the leaves in the trees, is a vibration of consciousness. Dyczkowski defines spanda as “potential energy as the impulse to

manifestation” and that “to lay hold of this initial moment of intent is to experience the pulsation of consciousness. It is to grasp the subject just in the moment of his intent to perceive, where consciousness is not yet restricted to any specific object but, free of thought constructs.”^{cclxi}

In yoga theory, spanda is a vibration that moves through various elements of being which include the atman (self), the subtle body, and the gross body. The subtle body includes the senses and the mind, and is considered to be interwoven with physical nerves and glands in the gross body.^{cclxii} In the yogic practices of Kashmir Shaivism it is generally understood that a human being has four bodies and four states that correlate to these bodies. The four bodies include the physical body (sthula sharina), the subtle body (sukshma sharira), the casual body (karana sharina), and the supracasual body. Sally Kempton in “Meditation for the Love of It” writes that “The texts of Vedanta speak of the physical body, the mind, and the other aspects of our being as “sheaths,” or “bodies,” superimposed like layers of an onion over the subtle energy of Consciousness that is our core Self.”^{cclxiii} Experiences in meditation happen in different realms of these bodies. This is not necessarily a “linear” progressive process, but rather meditation brings about awareness in these various spaces of being. Meditation brings about awareness of a physical body that can experience multiple kinesthetic and tactile sensations and is usually perceived most clearly in the waking state. The subtle body encompasses the energy of “feelings” and “perception”^{cclxiv} and awareness in dreams or meditation states where there is a loss of awareness of physical form. The casual body is found in deep stages of sleep and meditation, and the supracasual body is the experience and full absorption of the Self.^{cclxv} In her dissertation, Uttara Coorlawala also addresses the interconnectivity of the four bodies as having a long history of understanding in Indian dance:

The mind, body, emotions, senses, the generic and specific objects of sense perceptions are all perceived as inextricably linked. This perception permeates most traditional descriptions of the aesthetic, expressive, mental, and physical functions of the body. Terms alluding to this construct can be found throughout the Vedic, Puranic (seventh century AD), Upanishadic (eighth century AD), and later Hindu literature.^{cclxvi}

Various interpretations of these four bodies have been developed in Hatha Yoga, the Ayurvedic system of health and food, karma yoga, and meditation.^{cclxvii} Spanda, a creative vibration, emerges assisted by the flow of breathing (prana) and subtle energy (kundalini). The flows of breathing (prana) and subtle energy (kundalini) are the bridges between these bodies, though not necessarily in sequential order.

In the context of dance and the creative process, I associate hatha yoga, meditation practices, and the notion of spanda with somatics. Somatic work often refers to body therapies, body-mind integration, body mind disciplines, movement therapy, body work, and movement awareness. Bartineff, Feldenkrais Alexander Technique and Body-Mind Centering exercises, specific somatic techniques, were integrated into my own dance class training with various teachers as a tool for cultivating technique, improvisation, and choreography. For example my first modern dance instructor at Indiana University, Vera Orlock, would teach technique on Monday and Wednesday afternoon, and then Friday class was dedicated to Body-Mind Centering as a warm up to lead us into movement improvisation session. The focuses on a perceptual motor framework combined with an investigation of physiology and experiential anatomy were also vehicles for developing choreographic works Orlock created for our class. The practices of Body-Mind Centering “accepts that ‘the mind’ can be found in any and all parts

of the body, and that the mind, or intelligence, includes emotional experience.^{»cclxviii} Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, the founder of Body-Mind Centering (1973) is a certified Laban Movement Analyst and occupational therapist. She attributes major aspects of her own training to teachers from Asia, Europe, and the U.S. including T'ai chi masters and yoga practitioners. In New York she studied with Yogi Ramira of India.^{cclxix}

In Martha Eddy's article on *Somatic Practices and Dance: Global Influences*, Eddy notes the profound influences practices and the "degree of information flow" from other cultures and continents have had on U.S. dance students and somatic paradigm. "As students frequently have the privilege of studying dance, martial arts, and other movement practice from teachers around the world, it becomes more important to understand the connection between them."^{cclxx} The lineage of a dancer's training for technique, choreography, or improvisation is often comprised of many trajectories. Scholars such as Jill Green, Sherry Shapiro, and Martha Eddy have noted that theoretical paradigms associated with somatic discipline "are characterized by an emphasis on a whole system perspective: ecology, feminism, spirituality, cultural pluralism, nonviolent change, decentralization of decision making, and a shift from authority to self-responsibility."^{cclxxi} Eddy contends that "much like yogis, BMC practitioners learn to become aware of and initiate movement from organs, fluids, and glands to bring balance to the organism. Sound, touch, and movement are tools for this embodiment process."^{cclxxii}

In my research I began to generate and respond to the idea of choreographing *Ocean's Motion* tracing what I propose to be the impulse or "throb" of spanda, a somatic process that emerged through the place of my senses, mind, physical and subtle bodies beginning with a meditation experiences. I allocate quite a bit of space about the development of a concept for this choreography because the somatic process of generating ideas is part of my practice and often

takes a great deal of attention and time to cultivate. This process occurs before the act of crafting movement. The story begins with an excerpt from my journal where I had a sensation of feeling in my body that instigated my propulsion towards the conception of this dance.

April 4, 2011

Honolulu, Hawai'i

7am

“Today as I sat for meditation my mind was zooming. My thoughts were like a high speed chase on the California 405 highway. What should I wear to school today? I have to teach a lecture class so I better wear my nice floral print, but there is also technique so I need to pack my black sweats and a soft tee. Don't forget to skype in to class at 11am. Note to self – bring headset. This apartment is so small. Better stop at Down to Earth and pick up veggie lasagna for dinner.

Somewhere in the middle of this traffic jam in my mind I remember to breathe. When I direct my mind from the fast pace review of my day's activities to my breath, my thoughts stop chattering.

Breathe in.

I listen with my mind and whole body to my breath.

In the moment of experience my abdomen fills up with air and I feel the breath travel through my lungs while expanding my chest. My bones draw in towards my lungs.

Breath out.

On the exhale there is a slight sensation of air traveling out through my mouth and tongue.

My skin feels tingly.

The longer I focus on my breath, the more I become aware of how my body feels. My spine lengthens, each vertebrae stacking up one on top of the other, the joints in my knees relax, and I begin to be aware of the velour surface of the couch I am sitting on. I realize I'm tensing my shoulders and so I allow them to relax.

Breathing in, Breathing out.

Then I become aware of the birds outside my window. How did I not hear them ten minutes ago? How did the noise of my mind drown out the loud tick of the wall clock in the room? For the first time that morning I smell the fresh coffee I ground earlier. In the performance of quiet in my mind, I become present and keenly aware of the reverberations of outside sound, body, and environment.

Then there is only the sensation of stillness inside and movement outside.

My mind stops. I hear birds, I smell fresh coffee, I feel the velour couch fabric, my breathing occurs naturally, and my mind is quiet. I exist in this state of being for about ten minutes.

Towards the end of my meditation, an impulse emerges of being drawn towards something. Here is how I describe this feeling:

A gentle lightness inside.

So beautiful and sweet.

Ligaments, joints, bones, flesh relax.

I see and feel images of warm light moving through my sinews.

Flowing like water in a deep sea of self.

I feel drawn to be in the dance studio. To choreograph and make a new work.

My eyes open and I stand up to start the day.”

Martha Eddy's discussion about somatics as a "whole system perspective" reminded me that knowledge of creativity includes the entire environment, body, and mind. After I finish meditation practice I decide to agree with this spanda, or flashing forth of a vibration of feeling. For the past two years I have been focusing on writing and video work, mostly because I wanted to develop these areas. Now I would like to return to choreography and bring it all together. Why? Because of a feeling in my body mind state produced in part by the somatic discipline of pranayama, or breath practice. This structure of feeling emerged from the meditative experience of my subtle body, my mind and senses, and became a physical feeling.

In Hatha Yoga, one of the first steps of practice is pranayama. Shiva Rea Bailey suggests that a beginning student will learn to focus on the inhale and exhale as a tool for conscious breathing.

One of the primary functions of conscious breathing is to provide a focus for the distractions of the mind. From the beginning, the students are involved in trying to mend the separation of mind and body by learning to train their flow of thoughts so they are engaged at the bodily level. As outlined in the history of hatha yoga, asanas emerged out of the meditative tradition of yoga. Thus, the practice of breathing and the development of awareness in asana practice have parallels with the foundations of meditation.^{cclxxiii}

Focusing the mind on a point of concentration such as the breath locates the attention of the mind in the bodily experience of soma and is a practice of embodiment. When performing pranayama in movement, the practitioner becomes more aware of what is going on inside of thinking and the impulse for gesture.

As a result of meditation and focus on pranayama, I also recognize that there is something else in that feeling that I have yet to understand at this stage in the creative process. The spanda to choreograph something flowing like water is the vibration of feeling that emerges in the body mind state during meditation and directs me to make an active intention to create through movement. The spanda, or creative impulse, moves into action through my intention and decision to listen for inspiration for the dance. In this moment after meditation I do not know what form the impulse will take, but I know it exists and that I will intentionally listen to my inner voice and to occurrences in my environment for how to manifest it. The feeling is generated and I will respond to it through many layers of listening with all senses using mind and body.

Following this meditation I wrote a list of all my intentions for the upcoming year written on small individual pieces of white lined paper and scotch taped them to a wall in my house. This way, whenever I walked by the wall I would be reminded of goals and I would keep the feeling of the idea in the field of my awareness. One of those intentions was to create a dance about the ocean and consciousness. The theme of water has been in almost all my choreography and installation projects since the 1990s and has accumulated in different forms, so this was not a new idea. However I wanted to connect deeper into the presence I was experiencing with the Pacific in Hawai'i.

A week after this experience emerged in meditation and I made an intention to continue choreographing about water, I was sitting in my office at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I was a visiting lecturer and had just been offered a full time position when one of the faculty members bounced in bursting with excitement. "We have the theme of our spring 2012 dance concert. It will be called 'Ocean Motions.'" The first half will be dedicated to the story of the

Leafy Seaweed Dragon designed for youth theater school showings and the second half is wide open to abstract works based on the ocean for the general public. We'd like you to participate in some way, either through projection design or choreography or both."

At this point in the development of the dance choreography the vibration of inspiration is leading me to respond to an idea presented. The idea is to choreograph for a student university concert. My responsive mode is interested in figuring out how to do this through abstraction.

Dyczkowski describes the nature of the "perpetual state of pulsation (spanda)" in Shakti as something that is ever present and in a constant state of flux. "Change is the coming to prominence of one power at the expense of another. When a jar, for example, comes into being, the pragmatic efficacy of the clay ball is superseded by that of the clay jar."^{cclxxiv} Sometimes my creative process is to simply let go and let different ideas emerge. This process allows for ideas to present themselves in my mind body imagination in a playful sense to stay or dissolve in a state of "flux." So for the next week I left space for expansion and contraction of different pictures for choreographic ideas emerge in my mind about how to approach the ocean abstractly.^{ccclxxv} I jotted down these short notes as they arose in the visible plane of my consciousness like dolphins skimming the surface of the sea:

April 11, 2011

Shoot a dance sequence underwater down by Sans Souci beach?

Get down with weight belts. Looking up towards the reflecting light towards the top of the water. Create a large distance from the camera at the bottom to the dancers at the top to create the illusion of depth

Could be a projection design behind movement but are the dancers water people who could spend hours in the sea

A piece about fluidity

April 13, 2011

Maybe no live stage movement but instead make a dance film

The water connects the edges of the land we live on.

Film dancers with dive lights at beaches in both locations in San Diego and Hawai'i

Float the dive lights

The flame against the moving body creates texture

Somehow representing the light of the heart, the sparkle of the setting sun on the sea, the generations of warmth even though the ocean is cool

These visual choreographic concepts emerged with a pulse. Over the past years of my experience of “creativity” in choreographing dances or the last decade of experimenting with video, I have intuitively learned to recognize when I’ve logged on to an idea I want to follow because there is a strong felt presence in my entire body and mind. The feeling is like plugging into a light socket and my entire body vibrates. And I know I have arrived at the project I want to invest my time and energy in because of this structure of feeling. The feeling is like a deeply intertwined kiss, an intuitive gut feeling, a physical and sensory sensation of connectivity between my body, mind/thoughts/intellect, and emotions. There is a felt throbbing of vibration in my body. In the yogic traditions of Kashmir Shaivism, this experience could be described as a momentary feeling of oneness, a union of consciousness (Shiva) and energy (Shakti).^{cclxxvi}

At this point the creative process though, my critic and my muse were enjoying a playful debate. I decided to go back and re-read my past journals to see if there was something there that might spark what I was looking for. I often do this because sometimes I find ideas I wrote down years ago left unfulfilled become material I can draw from in the present. This is one way ideas

for projects accumulate. I came across this entry from 2009 that is an analysis of my creative tussle when I get stuck and it helped me to move forward.

November 11, 2009

Emerging from Wetness

I feel an embodied presence undulating beneath the surface of a glassy wave of ideas. A secret floating in the deep sea of self wanting to roll over the curling lip of imagination. I create to make an ocean flower garland of meaning and form.

My critic sometimes likes to play with my muse and blocks my flow of inspiration.

At this moment my critic is a tight rubbery wetsuit that doesn't fit quite right. It hangs low at the crotch making me feel uncomfortable when I try to walk, it draws my shoulders back in a high arch so that my breath doesn't flow naturally, and it makes me feel like a fat shoreline seal about to give birth.

My creator slashes that rubber open with a jack knife and lets the cool skin of vulnerability reveal itself. My creator is naked with nare even a bikini to hide underneath. I am free to expose myself and slip into the fresh water of creativity without being hindered by layers of thickness.

After writing this entry back in 2009 I chose to stop judging my ideas and give myself more time and space to for my body and mind to imagine and for the project to unfold. Besides, there was no hurry so why get mad at myself over getting stuck. Why not take more time to “breathe,” practice pranayama, and enjoy the mud? This is not to say that my critic is not creative or necessarily reflective. Rather that sometimes a space of quiet is needed in sensory awareness for the vibration of creativity, of spanda, to flow through in movement or words towards the initial manifestation of an idea.

Accumulation then is the gathering of ideas and creative reflection of concepts in the form of movement shapes, phrases, and choreography or video design. The way that I engage with critical reflection in the making of a dance is by keeping journals of process and returning to these when I make new work. As I write this dissertation I can now see that the journals use strategies close to the ‘two voices’ approach of storytelling and non-linear thinking, and this may be why they have been so fulfilling to return to. Since I was a teenager I have kept written, photo, and more recently video journals. These include responses to dreams, daily life experiences, meditations, travels, reading, and dance making. When I return and re-read a written journal entry or look at a photo, the whole body felt memory of an experience returns to my senses.

Accumulation is also the gathering of life experiences that stay with me and influence the process of dance making. For example I like the creative process of making a dance more than the final performance of a choreography. There are some theater companies that charge tickets to paying audiences for watching them create a work, and then the final show is free. I was thinking about this idea as I approached this section on accumulation and creative process. In doing so I reflected back on experiences from my life that might have contributed in part to why I value process so much in dance making. It made me think of a story when I was 17. When I was in high school I took a pottery class. I loved the feeling of the wet clay in my hands spinning around on the wheel. In one short semester I also learned to carve lids for ceramic bowls. Because I loved doing it so much, I would spend countless hours in the studio. I had a vision of butterflies resting on delicate tree limbs and prepared my first lid with this inspiration. The art required drying in the kiln overnight. To my surprise, every time I would check on my pottery I found my ceramic artwork smashed on the floor. This happened over and over again. Why would

anyone want to break this pottery when I was only a beginner? And as far as I knew I hadn't done anything to hurt anyone. After my initial tears, I somehow found a way to make a practice out of starting over again and to find meaning and beauty in the ephemerality of process rather than a final product. I also realized I could make art out of the broken pieces. And, I thought, if someone was so badly in pain that they needed to make a symphony out of ceramic lids hitting stone pavement then their hurt was greater than mine. This realization helped me continue on with the clay making. For some unknown reason I never did end up with a finished ceramic bowl. However that feeling of letting go and the experience of valuing process stayed with me. This is an example of the accumulation of a life experience in one moment in time that is embedded in the way I approach making dances.

Spanda and accumulation work together in the making of concepts for a dance. Spanda is the initial vibration of feelings and ideas that bursts forth and accumulation is the reflective process of creatively and contemplatively gathering these ideas. What follows are examples of how the experience of Bhakti as felt memory accumulated through journal entries, photos and reading poetry and began to develop a theme of reciprocity with water for the performance.

Bhakti as Felt Memory

After reflecting on the “layers of thickness” in the muddiness of my mind and the multiple possibilities of dance creation, I returned to the first impulse I had in meditation on April 4. That impulse was that “I felt drawn to be in the studio.”

On the surface it seems like such a simple thought. But as I reflected on the feeling I had inside when I experienced this moment, I began to think about the concept of bhakti. In yoga practice bhakti is the experience of participation and love. Bhakti is also a feeling of reverence.

The experience of Bhakti as felt memory is usually present in the phrases of choreography, elements of video editing, or written text that I return to in my journals for inspiration. Sometimes it is the smallest sliver of an idea, a single word, a movement gesture, the way an image is framed, that will spark a flow of new creativity in the present. In the meditation there was a feeling propelling the draw to the studio that was more important in that moment than an articulated mental thought. That feeling was bhakti.

May 1, 2011

Bhakti.

That is the feeling I want to express.

How I can I express a feeling of bhakti towards the ocean onstage?

And not only the ocean but presence in the ocean.

And not only presence in the literal ocean but in the ocean of consciousness.

Performing puja to the sea.

For the next several weeks I kept the concept of bhakti and the image of the ocean in the field of my awareness. The creative process of accumulation started as I looked back at photos and videos of a series of work I did in the late 1990s in New York City based on the songs, paintings, and poetry of the mystic Hildegard of Bingen. Her work was the springboard for creating choreography based on the concept of “veriditas” or the “greening power of the earth.”^{ccclxxvii} It was a large group piece for thirty dancers. The meditation process for developing the Hildegard work involved having a physical dialogue with her paintings, music, and text. By that I mean that I invoked my dancer’s version of the ‘two voices’ approach. I would look at the form of one of her paintings and explore feelings and shapes somatically felt through movement. I would also imaginatively talk with Hildegard in my mind, write down these thoughts, and then

create movement texture for a performative dialogue in gesture. As I revisited the photos, video and text, this triggered felt memories of the choreography in my body. The accumulation of these different kinds of documentation sparked a similar process for *Ocean's Motion*. I thought that to create the vastness of the sea in *Ocean's Motion* might require a large cast as well. And one day as I was taking a swim, I asked the sea, “How would you choreograph bhakti with an ocean theme? Do you have any ideas?”



Lanikai, Oahu.^{cclxxviii}

Figure 5.7 Photos while swimming in the water.

Needless to say, there was no profound moment of aha in response to my question. The ocean did not speak with any articulated words in return. I did notice however the sound of gentle lapping waves against the shore. As I sat with this rhythm, I thought about the nature of a wave and how wind transfers energy to water through friction in the air and water molecules with a fluid dynamic that stretches over a large surfaces. I reflected on the many different faces of the sea I've seen from the tiniest gentle ripple to huge rogue breaks. I also thought about how the energy of the waves that were arriving at my feet on the Lanikai beach had traveled

thousands of miles to reach the shore and how the wave completed its journey in a final lap against the sandy land's edge. I immersed my body in the warm water and floated for awhile. This sensation of vibration traveling in the ocean seemed to me like a good poetic metaphor for describing how the creative impulse of inspiration moves towards actualization in the making of dance and art. Afterwards I wrote these responsive experiences, images and thoughts down on paper to use as a possible springboard for generating movement and visual design. And later in the development of the choreography, all of these fluid textures ended up in the movement that will be discussed later.



Figure 5.8: Kāne‘ohe, Oahu ^{cclxxix}

Later that day, with the sounds of rippling water still in my consciousness, a picture of the cover of a book of poetry I had once read with an image of the 16th century poet saint Mirabai on the front cover surfaced in my mind.^{cclxxx} Being in the ocean initiated a connectivity to this memory. The accumulation of memories of texts are also a part of gathering in the creative process. I spent the rest of the evening visiting some of her poetry and searched for references to water. There were a few “ocean images” in the writing such as:

“Do not leave me alone.

My strength.

I am empty of virtues.

You, the ocean of them.

My heart’s music, you help me

In my world-crossing.

You protected the king of the elephants.

Where can I go?

For I have dedicated myself to you

And there is no one else for me.”

and

“If we could reach you through immersion in water,

I would have asked to be born a fish in this life.”

This struck a particular chord in me as I interpreted and read these verses as if it was addressed to my muse, that energy which is my heart’s music and as vast in scope as an ocean of virtues. All of these images had the feeling of devotion, of love, that I was looking for.

Then I shared with Dr. Archana Venkatesan the concept for a project about the ocean and consciousness I was contemplating and asked if she could recommend any bhakti poems about the sea. She sent a few verses by Tamil poet Nammalvar/Satakopan (9th century) that she translated into English from the poem “Tiruviruttam” that follows below. The word bhakti is defined as “devotion.”^{clxxxix} Bhakti has a long history in India. The Bhakti movement emerged

out of Tamil Nadu in the 7th century. Between the 12th and 17th centuries it was a movement throughout India that was associated with teachers and saints, particularly female poet-saints.^{ccclxxxii} Early teachings were about expressing a love and “devotion to God and equality of all believers without any distinction of class or birth.”^{ccclxxxiii} When I write about the bhakti poems in this chapter, I reflect on them through the lens of my own situated understanding of language meaning, place, yoga practice, and how they impacted me. The reflections are interpreted differently from the specific context of this devotional literature characterizing the time period of the poetry included here. When I came to the end of my research for this dissertation, I began to research the history of bhakti for future projects. Inevitably I realized that the following journal reflections of these poems from my initial more poetic dance research were created in the immediate context needed for the choreography and I will make stronger connections to their original intended meaning and history in future writing. This experience has been salutary in reminding me of the responsibilities of anyone working on cross-cultural dance. Just as earlier dance practitioners did not visiblize the traditions of yoga, so I find now that I did not visiblize the traditions of bhakti. The process of this dissertation has not only been to open out awareness of the history of yoga in modern dance, but to develop an awareness of how to attend to histories of the cultures that I work with in my own choreography.

Tiruviruttam 18

Her Friend Said

The clouds swallowed the sea and rose up,

And the furious ocean pursued them

To recover what was left.

Is it that time now when the sea rises up

To swallow Kannan's earth and sky?
Is it the season of storms?
Oh lovely one,
Perhaps these are your tears
That pour down like waterfalls to fill the sea!

May 6, 2011

As I meditate on these verses, I see in my imagination a dancer swimming in the ocean in a video projection design that could relate to and have a conversation with live dancers on stage. As if the ocean on a video projection high above the stage is the clouds and a dance video projection design character is providing her protection in the form of tears cascading down to dancers on a stage. The tears turn into sparkling diamonds of a sea of knowledge. The Tiruviruttam poem is abstractly sparking a different kind of idea for the structure of a video projection design on stage.

The way I approached reading these poems was through a contemplative meditation exercise that is one of my most fruitful non-linear strategies for thinking. I read the words, asked questions of their meaning, sat quietly, and then journaled the experience I had as a result. In this poetry I noticed they were all in dialogue with a salutation "you" in relation to water. Examples of this include "You the ocean of them," "If we could reach you through immersion in water," and "oh lovely one perhaps these are your tears that pour down like waterfalls to fill the sea." The poems are bhakti songs that expressed for me the feeling of devotion, compassion, caretaking, and relationship to the ocean. As part of the process, in my mind I literally asked the poems how would "you" appear in a production. This kind of inner dialogue is the seat of where knowledge and understanding sometimes springs in the development of a performance. I sat

quietly to see if any images or thoughts emerged. Although the reflection of the poetry was in the form of words, the responsive creativity, or immersion of spanda, was in the form of an image of a projection design concept. The “oh lovely one perhaps these are your tears that pour down like waterfalls to fill the sea” emerged in my consciousness as a projection design idea of the image of a feminine figure in the ocean gesturing towards a human on land and evoked an ecological relationship. The “pouring down” created an image of a sense of height and gravity like a waterfall. The practical and responsive idea was the concept of a video of a dancing body in water performing movements of “pouring” as she visually extends limbs downwards from a projection on a cyclorama towards dancers on stage.



Figure 5.9: San Souci Beach ^{cclxxxiv}

Spanda in meditation created the interest in making choreography. Returning to bhakti as felt memory in the previous Hildegard work and contemplating the feeling of poetry further developed the creative process. This process of inner dialogue between self and ocean or poetry

is a reflection of my experience of the yoga practice of participating in dancing in events at yoga ashrams. This includes dancing for holiday celebrations and dancing saptahs (circle dance). During this same pre-rehearsal period I participated in a dancing saptah that made me think about reciprocity between bodies and inspired some of the concepts for large group unison movement that became a part of the *Ocean's Motion* choreography. What follows is how participation in a dancing saptah generated the experience of bhakti.

A dancing saptah involves dancing in a circle with many participants performing a grapevine step during a namasankirtana chant in call and response with the instrumentation and vocals of lead singers, harmonium, and drummers. It is similar to community Garbha dances performed during Navaratri in India.^{colxxxv} The simple repetitive nature of a dancing saptah creates a synchronicity with space. The gestures require an attitude of awareness and attention to the dancer's individual body, the larger body of the mass group dancing, and the place in which the dance takes place. When the dance occurs outside, the attitude of awareness created by dance tunes the body into the resources of nature. When the dance occurs inside a community hall, this awareness tunes the body into the values of the community reflected in the architectural design of the place. This theory of flowingness between the dancer's body, nature, and architecture is vital to understanding the dance not only as a singular performative act, but also as an embodiment of culture.

Repetitive motion in circle dancing also synchronizes community. Dancers connect to shifts in music tempo and to the visual rhythm of the other movers. Circular movement syncs physical and emotional sensations with the other bodies moving in the dance. Many perceptual elements are involved in dancing in unison such as tuning in visually to how other movers space their bodies in relationship to the circle, feeling the weight of gravity, listening to the sound of

feet as they hit the ground, becoming aware of one's breath in the body, noticing the pace of one's heartbeat to determine if it is possible for the body to keep up with the movement, being sensitive to balance, and intuitively being aware of shifts in the rhythm of the music. In dance performance in general, I have experienced and also heard many dancers say that the tighter the movement and elements around a dance sync together, the more they feel as if their individual body becomes one with the larger circle. In a dancing saptah, I felt my individual body dissolve into the sensation of larger spherical space of the group body. This was a feeling of synchronicity.

A dancer in a dancing saptah orients perception both inwardly and outwardly. The focus is inward on the flow of breath, as it is hard to keep up with a fast moving circle without this. The outward focus is on the movement of the community. The vibration of sound while chanting outloud ripples through the body and dancing space. While in the dancing saptah I literally feel energy from the ground vibrating through my feet and moving up through my body out the extremities of my fingertips and the top of my head. I always identify this experience as a sacred moment. The moment is one of connectivity to the earth, to my body, to the Self, to my breath, and to the people I am dancing with. Spatial orientation is layered by the group one is dancing with, the texture of the ground underneath the feet (for example whether it is a marble floor hall or a grassy lawn), and the architecture or landscape holding the dancing grounds. In this sense, the movement and chant responds from and to land and environment.

The spanda that emerged from this experience of the dancing saptah was the idea that large group movement choreography on stage in *Ocean's Motion* could further create feelings of empathy, connection and synchronicity with the ocean, another earth body mass. At this time of ecological crises in the Pacific there is much to learn about reciprocal relationships in tuning in

and living with responsibility towards the planet. A challenging issue that currently affects many Pacific island nations is a recent increase in natural disasters and the impact on rainfall, storms, temperatures and sea levels rising where some lands are no more than 5 meters above sea level.^{cclxxxvi}

The emergence of spanda and of being drawn to choreograph, and of ideas for projection design emerging from poetry, as well as the experiences of bhakti in returning to felt memories in previous Hildegard dance choreography and participating in the community movement of a dancing saptah, were a part of the pre-production creative process stage of gathering concepts for a new performance in relation to the collaborative place of memory, community, physical and subtle body. I understand now that they all contributed to the non-linear strategies that would inform the storytelling of the performance. At the time, I kept them in the focus of my awareness but did not force the experiences or thoughts to take a specific form yet in terms of choreographic concept.

Choreography and Improvisation

The crystallization of joining the *Ocean's Motion* production arrived in the second week of May when Amy Schiffner, my U.H.M. dance colleague, invited me to consider co-directing with her the hour long dance theater for young adults dance piece. This seemed to bring together many of the ideas I had been contemplating so I agreed and the work began to take external shape. The full show already had the title *Ocean's Motion* and her idea was that our contribution to the performance would involve puppets, actors, dancers, and media design. We sat down in our dance offices on at the U.H. Mānoa lower campus and began to brainstorm choreographic and staging concepts.



Figure 5.10: The Old Temporary Dance Building at U.H. Mānoa Campus where O.M. was initially created and rehearsed. ^{cclxxxvii}

The location of this brainstorming session has a pulse for me because I believe it affected our ideas. At that time the U.H. Mānoa dance offices were located in a temporary building that had been there for 30 years. The dance studio was close to the physical education complex and sat next to the football field. Our offices were literally twenty feet from the daily practicing UH marching band. What I liked so much about this place was the constant physicality of runners, baseball players, and volleyball players outside our doors. This surge of bodies in physical training on the field blended well with the dancing bodies training inside the studio. The lively practicing musicians provided a swell of beating drums, loud trombones, and the occasional piccolo as the backdrop for our brainstorming sessions. We ultimately cast 38 performers. I think the bombastic energy of the marching band was part of how the preproduction stage of place inspired this large ensemble casting.

In the generating mode, I have an idea in my mind of a theme, choreographic phrase, or video image, and I start to create based on this spanda or impulse. Entering into the collaborative

process with Amy, I brought the spanda for large group unison movement, projection design concept, and reflections on ecological connectivity to our conversation. She also brought ideas and together we created new a framework that will now be developed in detail. Once the action of creating responds to the impulse, the mode could be considered both generating and responsive at the same time, leading to the collaborative work at the heart of storytelling. Next is a step by step example of these modes of generating, responding, and collaboration occurred in the creative process.

With *Ocean's Motion*, all three modes began to happen in the first week we started collaborating. The following emerged from creative impulse, spanda. We both wanted to choreograph, Amy was interested in writing a script for the puppeteers and actors, and I was keen to create a projection design. We drafted a score in google docs^{cclxxxviii} and began compiling any abstract ideas that came to mind and tossed our ideas back and forth to each other online. We created a list of sea creatures or ocean elements that we could imagine dancing. This included surfers, waves, tropical schools of fish, pine cone fish, kelp, coral, sea plants, sea dragons, sea anenomes, manta rays, leafy sea dragons, pinecone fish, sea anemones, coral, kelp, octopus, dolphins, jellyfish, whales, flashlight fish, lantern fish, crabs, cookie cutter sharks, eels, and moon jellies. After looking at our potential cast of characters, we started to group them and realized we had three groups of fish and marine animals from shallow water, to deep sea, and ultimately a bioluminescent world. To unite this theme we created a mythic legendary water character called Sundara. The idea was that she would be the main character and exist in the video projection design only. She appeared in every scene and interacted with the characters in Amy's script SeaFoam, Bubbles, and Sea Bird. The concept of the video projection dancer as a main character related back to my earlier responses to the idea that was generated in response to

the Tiruviruttam 18 poetry. The idea was to keep the production light and educational, but also to create a kinetic ecological consciousness with ocean life, to bring the energy of the sea that surrounded the island we live on into the theater. The responsive mode in this brainstorming process involved listening to each other's concepts outline above via discussion, email, phone calls, and google docs, then responding to ideas through creating new content such as how the various characters would relate to a story and be constructed through the set.

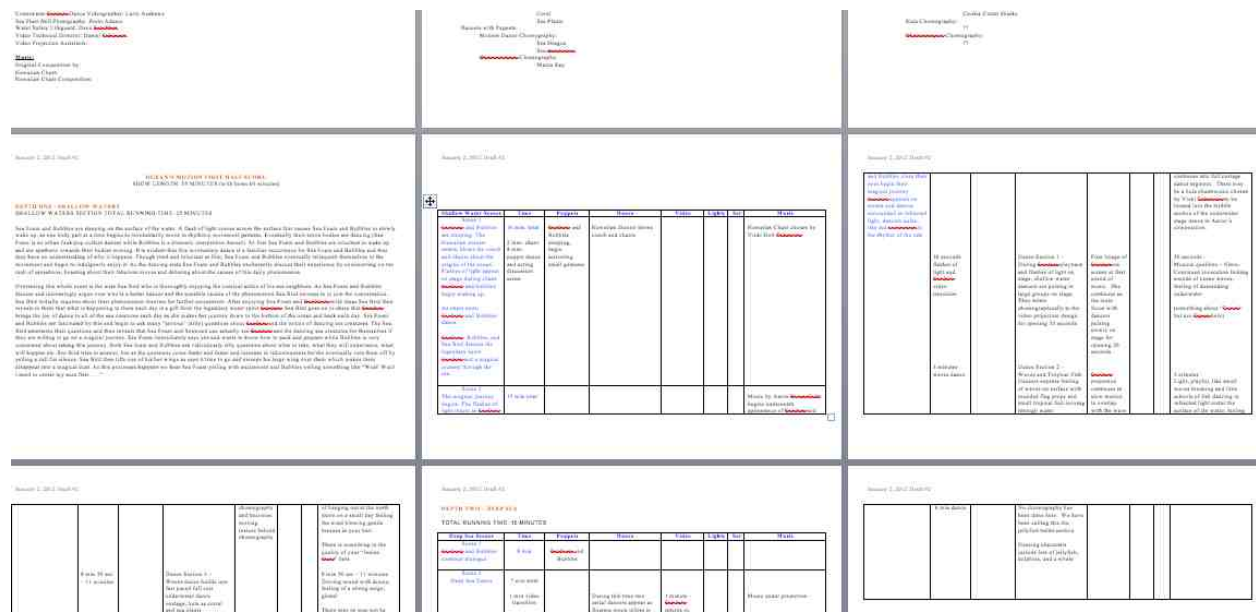


Figure 5.11: Image of the O.M. Score in Process ^{cclxxxix}

The choreography was developed in the U.H.M. Dance Studio Temporary Dance Building and the Physical Education Dance Studios from October 2011 – March 2012. Rehearsals with the full dance cast were scheduled twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6pm – 9pm. In the middle of the year the U.H. Dance program moved locations to the P.E. Education building because the old building was being torn down and replaced with a new

complex. This meant a huge physical upheaval in terms of space and place as rehearsals were going on.



Figure 5.12: Initial O.M. Rehearsals in the Temporary Dance Building ^{CCXC}

Our collaborative, mainly non-linear strategies started in the brainstorming process and continued as we conducted rehearsals together. Amy and I each came prepared to the rehearsal with our own phrases and then taught the choreography or combined our ideas on the spot. Because the cast was so large, we often split different parts of the room and developed the movement with different dancers at the same time. Then we brought the phrases together and improvisationally tried out different scenarios of how the groups might work together. This created a lively energy in each rehearsal and enabled us to develop a lot of material quickly. We agreed in advance of this process that time was a concern and that simply generating choreographic phrases for individual groups would be the primary focus initially. We made a timeline with dates of goals for pulling the choreography together for different sections. If either of us felt the choreography was not working in the moment, we decided to let it go in order to

meet our timelines knowing that we could return later to refine the movement. For this reason we also required the full cast to be available at every rehearsal. Before each rehearsal we talked and made a plan for that evening's activities. We also agreed that we would not critique each other's work in front of the other dancers in rehearsal. Post reflective discussions in the studio or on the phone followed each rehearsal.

In November 2011 Kumu Vicky Holt Takamine joined us in collaborating on the choreography. She suggested we open *Ocean's Motion* with an oli (Hawaiian chant) based on the Kumulipo^{ccxci}. The Kumulipo is a chant in the Hawaiian language that tells a story of creation. The original chant is 2012 lines long^{ccxcii} and she selected a shorter version for an opening five minute chant "Wa 'Akahi" performed by Kali'iku Kaowili. Kumu Vicky and her assistant Charlene Hazlewood, choreographed the movement for dancers for the oli and for the Bioluminescent section of the performance and we all collaborated in blending the different movement styles together.

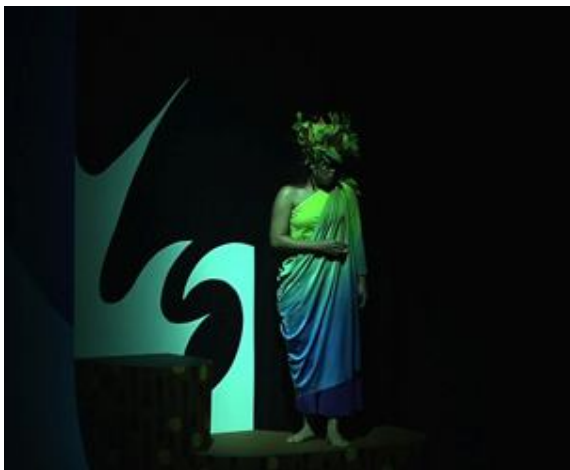




Figure 5.13: O.M. Performance at Kennedy Theatre ^{ccxciii}

In the responsive mode in choreography, I am creating movement ideas based on music, poetry, a theme, or architectural space. Aaron Huisenfeldt was commissioned to create an original soundscore. I had worked with Aaron on a short film in Tijuana. He is a surfer and I knew he would have a feeling for the kind of sound that would support dance and reflect the texture of being in the sea. Since he was creating the sound score at the same time we were making the dance, we used audio recordings that had a similar rhythms for rehearsals and then brought in Aaron's music at the end. We knew what these rhythms would be because Aaron asked for us to establish a rhythm before composing. This was his suggestion because there was not time for him to write and record music and then have us try it out. Amy and I selected songs for each section that had a different tempo and we sent Aaron video recordings of rehearsals online. He then created an original composition based of off the designated rhythm and choreography in the video documentation.

While Amy and I did not ever discuss the notion of the practice of yoga as a direct influence in the making of the work, my own yoga practice informed my creative preparation,

choices, and artistry. I would spend thirty minutes meditating before attending rehearsals. I incorporated asana postures into the movement, and meditation and chanting was part of my process for creating movement phrases in the studio before I would bring choreographic ideas to rehearsal with the full group and in my focus on breath while filming the projection. What is outlined in the next section is a detailed discussion of how breathing and meditation influenced my preparation for rehearsals in a generating and responsive mode.

I also found personal humor in the title *Ocean's Motion* which became abbreviated and called "OM" for short in emails and conversations. This titling of "OM" was unintentionally the letters of the sound of the yogic syllable "om" a popular representation of "aum." As a result, I generated a lot of poetry that brought to the surface autobiographical memories about moment in my creative process that I recorded in my research journals. Amy worked collaboratively with the actors and also included pop culture references to yoga in her script including references such as the description for the Bubbles character as "...has many self improvement books, practices yoga and meditation, eats organic"^{ccxciv}, Bubble's dialogue including, "He's stuck by me through the high tides and the low, when my aura turned grey, and when I was stuck in diving dolphin yoga pose for two weeks"^{ccxcv}, and script notes for Bubbles's movement including: "(she begins doing yoga, Foamy joins her in yoga moves)."^{ccxcvi} The intervention here is that while yoga and pop references are not immediately compatible, synchronicity and being in tune with one another was at play in the creative process. In the production, we had an intuitive way of anticipating the other's sense of direction in where the story, choreography, and visual staging would go. Though at different times, we both had trained under some of the same dance technique and choreography teachers in Southern California. Our movement and aesthetics styles as a result had points of connection so this helped create a process of ease in co-choreographing.

Susan Foster's ideas on Kinesthetic Empathy could also have contributed to the synchronicity and compatibility of co-choreographing *Ocean's Motion*. Her essay article *Movement's Contagion: The Kinesthetic Impact of Performance*^{ccxcvii} discusses the contagion of movement in relationship to an audience that I found useful in thinking through how *Ocean's Motion* was collaboratively choreographed and how a viewer of *Ocean's Motion* might perceive or experience kinesthetic empathy with the ocean, sea creatures, and the architecture of the set design through the dancer's body and movement.

Foster theorizes that the body transmits, interacts with, and perceives movement in a "propensity toward contagion"^{ccxcviii} A contagion is something that spreads easily around. Taking Foster's idea further, as the choreography developed inspired by the way sea life moves, there is a sensory contagion between the dancer, the stage space and fish, and, in how the choreography was developed in rehearsal. For example I spend a lot of time swimming in the ocean and I feel the movements in space and ocean life in my body as I moved to create movement for the dancers. The intention of the choreography was to embody the consciousness of the ocean and to be a link between ocean ecology and humanity. The physical elements in the water influence the choreography. The deep sea section of the dance was created to embody the movement of whales, dolphins, and jelly fish. The round soaring space of the stage and Meg Hanna's curved set design inspired a fluid quality to the movement choices and the upright looming hung aerial hoops from the rafters shaped verticality in this section of the work. The dancers emerge around set pieces of standing kelp objects from the floor making the sightlines for each observer different. The video projection design incorporates footage of actual jellyfish moving through space. As choreographers, our similar dance training provided us with a similar dance technique and choreographic aesthetic vocabulary that we could move fluidly into when needed. In this

way, the contagion of space and animals interacts with and influences the choreography. Foster writes,

Viewers bodies, even in their seated stillness, nonetheless feel what the dancing body is feeling – the tensions of expansiveness, the floating or driving momentums that compose the dancer’s motion. Then, because such muscular sensations are inextricably linked to emotions, the viewer also feels the choreographer’s desires and intentions.^{cccxcix}



Figure 5.14: View of O.M. set from the Kennedy Theatre House^{ccc}

Because of the connections in our training backgrounds, I believe we were able to collaboratively choreograph with ease even across the differences in those backgrounds in the way we may have experienced each other’s movement vocabulary through “contagion” and “muscular sensation.” As I will now go on to explore, I believe that the audience of Ocean’s Motion also feel the lines and presence of the ocean through the dancers’ bodies as non-linear modes of thinking that include them in the storytelling of the concepts. The dance becomes a medium for connecting our physical bodies to physical space, to embodying the way energy moves among people, sea life, and the set design on stage. Also, in the show the audience is

invited to participate in gestures and song in the creating of a mass movement experience. This was designed to particularly engage the school children. Throughout the piece the actors teach a gestural movements to the audience. 500 people raising their arms in unison is a tremendous visual image and kinesthetic experience that creates empathy in the physical experience of our muscular sensations and emotions.



Figure 5.15: Deep Sea Section of O.M. ^{ccci}

Foster suggests there is a neurophysiological contagion of mirror neurons that are activated when a body performs or sees an action that causes the viewer to anticipate another's action. Such as in the case of "yawning and laughter"^{cccii} and that scientists have concluded that this kind of physical resonance occurs in art as well. Are my mirror neurons firing and interacting with this interaction when I see choreographic vocabulary and movement styles with connections to mine, or perceive ocean animals in the video projection and the dancers onstage thus creating a kinesthetic empathy that might make one feel connected to the consciousness of the sea? In alignment with Foster's thoughts about contagion, the onstage video projected sea life transmits a felt presence from physical body to my body that I understand through my senses. One example of how this might happen is that the ocean footage and many of the videos of sea

life presented were filmed in Hawai‘i. Many of the audience swim there. There is a kinesthetic connection to this texture of water, the way it flows, and the sea life that inhabits it. Many of the audience members are familiar with not only how the sea currents feel, but also how the fish look creating a “contagion” affect when experiencing the ocean through movement and projection design outside of natural settings. The choreography of Ocean’s Motion then communicates a sense of relatedness among human, sea creature, and earth bodies and through this process can create a feeling of connection to nature. In this way, dance has the potential to create groundwork for personal change by literally shifting the way we breath and becoming ecologically aware of our natural world even if we are working within the limits of human understanding in a performance stage environment.

Meditation and Breathing

In my generating mode of creating a dance, the initial vibration often comes from my meditation practice in yoga. Usually a feeling of being drawn towards something emerges. I spend at least thirty minutes a day sitting in stillness, focusing on the intake and outtake of my breath, and observing the performance of quiet in my mind.

This state of being in the present is a concept of meditation in yoga. Yoga emphasizes “the development of concentration on a highly refined object, like the breath, to produce profound states of absorption.”^{ccciii} Meditation in yoga involves enlivening the yogic principle of prana, the life force of the body. “Prana has always played a vital role in hatha yoga. Ancient Tantric texts, like the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and *Gheranda Samhita*, list various techniques to help build, channel, and regulate life force.”^{ccciv} In these writings, different movements or asanas cultivate the flow of prana in the body to develop a sense of vital energy and expansion in the

gesture. In yoga there are many tools that are helpful to cultivating awareness that include asana, meditation, or chanting activities. In my creative process, I meditate and often move into a space of silence or listening through my awareness. Dancing can be a form of moving meditation. It's about connecting the experience of the subtle body to the awareness of sensation and prana. It's about practicing being in the present.

Previously I described a focus on the breath as a listening tool for spanda. I utilise a similar practice for improvising movement to develop dance phrases in choreography. When I am developing movement, I often listen to where breath in my body has a pulse or initiate a movement and take me across the floor. For now I will call this process b-patterning (short for breath patterning), my own words to describe how I develop movement out of observing the rhythm of breath in my body.



Figure 5.16: Temporary Dance Building Studio. The location where much of the choreography was developed for the production. ^{cccv}

October 12, 2011

Written at the end of a practice session

I enter the studio, take my shoes off, and change clothes. No one is around so I strip quickly in front of the mirrors into something more comfortable. I take note of the reflection of a body that looks withered from the intensity of a high impact work schedule. My hair is a mess, my eyelids are drooping, and I've gained some weight from the stress of my new job. Somehow I need to move beyond this feeling of exhaustion so I can tap into energy that will allow creative unbounded flow. The glance in the mirror makes me aware of a desire to relax my body and move into a space where I can be an empty vessel for flow to move through me.

I pull out audio speakers and set up my ipod. Then I sit quietly for meditation. I close my eyes and sit cross legged on the floor. I hear the sound of the rickety old fans overhead whirring but all else is quiet. I bring the awareness of the focus of my mind from the fans to the feeling and sound of the breath in my body. I notice that the pattern of breath in is at first feels tight and shallow in my lungs.

My mind begins to wander to everything I just read on facebook. Note to self, never read facebook before going into the choreograph otherwise I'll end up in New York having a latte and dessert with my friends rather than being present in the studio. Unless of course I want to make a dance about cheesecake. Breathe.

Again, I practice bringing my focus back to the feeling and sound of my breath. As I do so, my breath deepens and expansively fills my lungs deeper and deeper with each intake. Observing the repetition of the intake and outtake of the breath develops a visual breath pattern in my mind that helps to harness my thoughts to being in the present. By doing this, I'm able to temporarily

let go of work and personal items that don't need to be done right then and there and attend to the purpose of being in the studio in this moment, which is to create movement phrases for Ocean's Motion.

As I continue to focus on my breath, I begin to listen to the sounds outside of my body. I hear the wind whistle through the folded wooden blinds. I hear the leaves in the trees outside rustle and it sounds to me as if the Ocean is in the trees.

I chant Aum very slowly and in different pitches. In my opening chanting I invoke Shiva and Shakti, the masculine and feminine energy of creativity to be fully present with myself. My body vibrates with the power of the chant. I sense a connection through sound and flow in the vibrational patterns with my body, space, and ecology.

After about ten minutes of meditation, I lie on the floor with my eyes closed, arms and legs outstretched like a starfish. I do a mindful body scan. I notice the feeling of how the surface of my body touches the flat plateau of the marley floor. I imagine the breath reaching out into the extremities of my fingers and toes and the oxygen rises and falls in my core and limbs. I imagine this breath flowing into the floor and walls and then slowly I turn over on my belly and move into downward dog. The palms of my hands splayed flat on the floor my hips aligned on a diagonal to my feet the breath in my body begins to take a more regularly defined patterned shape in my body. Slowly my weight moves back over my heels and I roll up into tadasana, standing mountain pose. My hips are balanced squarely over my feet. My eyes open and take in the details

of the room, a barre that looks crookedly fixed to the far wall 20 feet away and a hairline crack emerging from the ceiling. My mind listens to my breath, my body, the space all at once.

I know I'm here to make some phrases for the sea anemones so I start to visualize these creatures. As I picture their swirling form, I feel an impulse in my hip that sends me into a arcing pattern diving into the floor and then cycling back up. My movement is initiated by my breath and I play with movement by repeating gestures, repeating these movement breath patterns as if I'm immersed in thick salty water. I begin to b-pattern over and over while continuously adding a new movement idea to the phrase.

I feel the warmth of the hot sun streaming rays of particle light on my hair.

My body is open.

My form momentarily dissolves.

There are no edges to my skin, to this doorway, to the end of the universe.

A spiral of orange golden glow thrusts out of my core and I shift my weight,

Jarred back to self

I stand, feet parallel, in this swaying rhythm.

Centering.

Breathing.

Connecting to oxygen.

Making space for the place between the breaths.

Repeat phrase.

Extend my arm on the outbreath, fold in as I contract again.

Listening to currents of the room, like currents in the ocean.

Listening to currents in my body, like currents in the sea.

Flow between the surface of skin and sea.

Small tiny adjustments. Observations without words. Feeling. How does my torso feel as I spiral from the floor up into a limbs extended wide in a balance on the edge of one foot.

I experience quietness in motion.

No words.

My inner awareness is focused.

Listening to my body and breath.

An internal rhythm helps me achieve flow as I move into a place of stillness within.

Time seems suspended. I notice the clock and two hours has gone by in what felt like five minutes. I have material memorized in my body because of the repetition and I have enough to take into tomorrow night's rehearsal. I do not need words to transmit this phrase and feeling to the dancers. By bringing them into this space and demonstrating the movement, the transmission of the idea will take form and shape.

This is one example of how I approached generating movement ideas to bring into rehearsals with dancers. This is a process that happens before going to a rehearsal with a group. For many people yoga is about asana or posture exercises. Certainly in dance this is part of toning, strengthening and stretching the body. As discussed in the last chapter, many

contemporary dancers in the U.S. are incorporating yoga posture into the technique classes and going to hatha yoga studios as a core element to train the dancer's body. In my creative and spiritual practice, yoga is about tuning the body, and, about tuning into subtleties of meditation and the heart. I experience life through my body, but when I'm in a web of mental ideas and thinking I miss out on the wisdom that direct sensory experience brings to me. In dance, I reconnect to that physical knowledge.

As expressed by dance anthropologist Cynthia Novack in her work on contact improvisation, dance research sometimes creates translations that “subsume the reality of the body, as if the experiences people have of themselves moving in the world were not an essential part of their consciousness and of the ways in which they understand and carry out their lives.”^{cccvi} In this context, there is a separation of the mind from bodily experience where movement comes to stand for or reflect reality. Or as Novack suggests the opposite happens and researcher may “react by posting the body and movement as the primary reality.” All of these approaches separate the body, the movement, and the mind as entities. I used a lot of improvisation to develop choreography for Ocean's Motion and Novack's discussion of the mind body relationship reflected for me that the experience of moving in the sensation of mindfulness is all about listening to the body. Connecting the mind and the body together. Listening for me is about returning my focus to the source – my breath. I breath in and out, I listen to the way my breath sounds as air moving through my nose and throat cavity, and I also listen to the space between my breaths. This practice focuses my mind.

As I will develop below this enables me to be more aware of my body, my environment, or people around me when I move in space. I flow more freely and have more freedom to make physical or emotional choices in my choreography. When I'm listening and aware through my

breath, I can instigate or choose to respond to energy for example physically through swooping, swirling, and being soft, or contracting, pushing, and being hard, or emotionally through tapping into and expressing joy, happiness, sorrow, or anger. The practice of tuning into the neutral awareness of my breath, creates equanimity, receptiveness, and an open landscape in my awareness to quickly access and explore the qualities of different emotional and physical states in my choreography. These states are generated within my being and in response to the environment of nature, people, animals, and objects. For example through listening in movement, and expanding my awareness, I can respond to and invoke the qualities of a mountain, the ocean, or the sky.

Water also plays an important role in the mind body connection. Since the focus of this work was the ocean, I was aware that “up to 60% of the human adult body is water.”^{cccvii} Being mindful of what I eat and drink affects the state of my mind body relationship. A few of the things that water does for the body is to deliver oxygen, convert food for digestion, regulate the temperature of the body, and is “needed by the brain to manufacture hormones and neurotransmitters” in order to function. All living things are related. During the making of Ocean’s Motion, my consciousness was in tune with the responsibility I had for what I was taking into the land mass of my physical form in order to have a clean organism to create from, and I was building an understanding of this interconnected relationship of what goes into the health of the ocean through a sense of belonging and stewardship.

Wilson discusses that instrumental to an indigenous research paradigm is the building up of relations. This includes “relations with people” and “relations with the environment/land.” Reading this, I recalled that as a child I was often told I was “grounded.” Not grounded in the sense of being confined to a room for misbehavior, but grounded in sense of being. I speculate

this is because I grew up around farmers. What is perhaps true about this is that where I lived was indeed landlocked in the middle of cornfields, low rolling hills, and farming land. The “ground” was an integral part of my relationship to an understanding of self. Now when I live on an island that can be crossed in a half hour drive across a short land mass, I seek to cultivate and build new understandings of self relations to this place that includes so much water. One of the ways that I make connections is through movement.



Figure 5.17: Dancing at the Mānoa Falls river ravine in Mānoa Valley

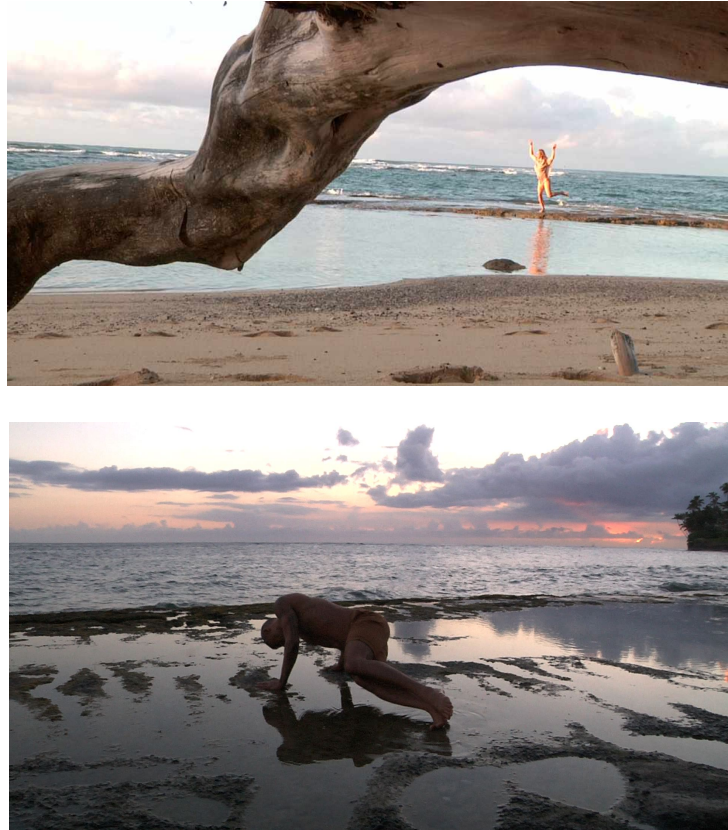


Figure 5.18: The site of filming the projection design for “I AM”^{cccviii}

In movement, I find this awareness helps me in making choreographic choices about tiny details. Listening with my subtle body in movement involves paying attention to what arises in me in relation to my environment. This could be an image in my mind, a feeling in my emotions, or a sensation in my organs, ligaments, or bones in my body. Then I follow this idea or actualize the feeling in a patterned choreographed physicalized form. I often improvise to develop spatial movement patterns before I work with a group of dancers. In the improvisation I focus on listening to space and my environment with my subtle mind body. How does the texture of the earth feel underneath my skin that causes an undulation of rooting into the ground through the outside edge of my metatarsals? How does the quality of the sound of the birds affect a rippling rhythm responding in body? Can I extend my arm a little further in space? Do I need to scratch

the itch on my tummy or can I just be aware of it? Should I go there across the river because I saw the wind blowing through the leaves or stay here on this side because the sunlight is streaming warmly through the openings in the trees? Does the picture of a rock I see in my mind have a quality of strength I can create in my gesture?

In many ways the way I create choreography is a practice that is not much different than the way I approach my life. Through meditation a focus on being mindful creates a state of equanimity and receptiveness that I find enables the ability to deal with daily challenges and stress. In choreography, it creates a feeling of freedom to follow ideas that don't have to make logical sense and opens up my creativity to new ideas. In daily life, it creates a state of equanimity that helps me think through and be receptive to change and fresh possibilities without judgement.

So far in this chapter I have gone on a journey of critical self discovery through the creative process by calling on non-linear ways of thinking and revisiting memories and meditations, and by telling stories to make meaning out of one situated way of practicing yoga in dance. In the process, I also tell the story of how I became aware of this 'two voices' approach in my creative practice and in collaborative performance. One of the questions that I am asking of this research is what knowledge or states of awareness can be generated in the practice of yoga in dance in creative process as performance? I have examined pre-production elements of the show Ocean's Motion through notions of spanda and accumulation, bhakti as felt memory, meditation, and breathing in the development of the choreography and show planning. In this section I also discussed the place of creative process as performance in relation to Massey's concept of space, Kempton's contemplation the four bodies in Kashmir Shaivism, Eddy's research in somatic practices, Foster's theories of kinesthetic empathy, and Shawn Wilson's discussion of relational

accountability. At the end of this chapter I will explore how aspects of practice as research in this study could encourage other artists and scholars in their own research.

Video Projection Design

The video projection design for Ocean's Motion was developed over the summer of 2011 and fall 2012. The concept for the projection design was initially a response to a reading meditation on poetry discussed in the last section and an accumulation of previous performance projects. What is developed in this next section is a reflection on spanda, and meditation in the making of a video projection design for O.M.

Since filming in the ocean would involve expensive equipment, I had the idea to shoot footage of sea creatures through glass at an aquarium. During the summer of 2011 I spent time at the Birch Aquarium in La Jolla, California and filmed video of jelly fish and sea dragons. On screen this artificial effect created an up close vision of these creatures that might not have been as possible if they had been shot in the sea. The Waikiki Aquarium also generously donated images of local sea anenomes and plants. Peggy Gaither Adams shared some underwater sea photos that her late husband Brent Adams had filmed off the coast in the Pacific. All of these images were then blended and layered with video of dancers.



Figure 5.19: Underwater images by Brent Adams. ^{cccix}

This early seed of impulse to focus on water was not something new. In many ways, this projection design was a technological means of examining and constructing a creative autobiography of sorts. The autobiography is of a relationship with living near and with the ocean in New York, California, and Hawai‘i for 20 years. Michael Renov’s “The Subject as Documentary” suggests memory can be a way into thinking about selfhood in identity. Although Ocean’s Motion was a new work, I have been choreographing dances and making projection designs with themes of water since 1995. The accumulation of collaborative process in these works filtered into the creation of O.M. in terms of including some former excerpts of choreographic phrases and video I had shot previously. Traces of these works were present in O.M. Previous artistic endeavors that focused on elements of water and had a creative relation to my contribution to Ocean’s Motion include the following:

- 1996 Missa Gaia: Earth Mass (Sanctus), NYC - choreography
- 1997 In the Beginning, NYC - choreography
- 1998 Hildegard of Bingen, NYC - choreography
- 2005 The Border Starts Here, MEXICO - choreography
- 2005 A Fish Impression, CA – choreography

2006 Submerged Ascension, CA – choreography and projection design
2006 The Watergirl Project Video Project, SRI LANKA – video short
2008 5 Elemental Theory, CA – choreography and projection design
2009 Ellas Danzan Solas, MEXICO – video short
2009 Surface, ISTANBUL – projection design
2011/12 Ocean’s Motion, HI – co-choreography and projection design
2011 Shifting Sands, FL - choreography
2012 Permit Me Voyage, HI - choreography
2013 Etched, HI – co-choreography and projection design
2014 I AM, HI AND FRANCE– projection design
2014 2nd Try, KOREA AND FRANCE – projection design

In my process journal during the making of *Ocean’s Motion* I wrote the following note:

October 10, 2011

I have been making dances and projection designs about water for over a decade now. I am fascinated with the power of water. The truth is, it often takes me many years of “process” to create a piece. At least one that has lasting life and is meaningful to me. There is usually a long trace of accumulation that leads to the performance and that performance is often the beginning of another trace.

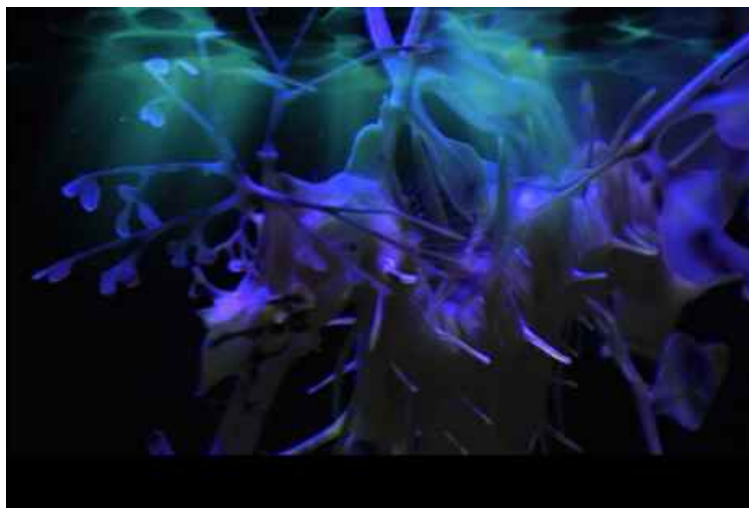


Figure 5.20: Image from video projection design of the Leafy Seaweed Dragon shot at the Birch Aquarium in San Diego, California. ^{cccx}

Renov discusses how in the 1990s documentary films performed the self in ways “in which the representation of the historical world is inextricably bound up with self inscription.” He contends that a recurring theme that is present in this era of films is the idea that “subjectivity is no longer construed as ‘something shameful’; it is the filter through which the real enters discourse, as well a kind of experiential compass guiding the work toward its goal as embodied knowledge.”^{cccxi} In the experimental video projection design on stage, I was aware of the self reflectiveness in the shots. The “experiential compass” was the accumulation of experiences of listening with my senses through yoga practice and viewing the filming and editing process as an active meditation. The embodied knowledge was the accumulation and way of working as a process of collaboration between dance and film over the past 15 years on several projects that lay the foundation in the making of *Ocean’s Motion*.

Three examples of ways that *Ocean’s Motion* “performed the self” of previous projects and accumulated ideas includes the incorporation of concepts from *Missa Gaia*, *Beaches*, and *Submerged Ascension*. One way we addressed creating a feeling of the vastness of the ocean was to have a large cast. Another reflection was that there needed to be a sense of height in the stage design in order to visually create a deep sea. As we were brainstorming, I thought back to the choreography of *Missa Gaia (Sanctus)* which was a dance for the ocean and whales and required a physical way of filling out space.

In the first week of October every year over 5000 people and their animals enter into the largest gothic cathedral in the world to remember and celebrate their relationship to the planet through the ritual of the Missa Gaia, or Earth Mass, at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. The sounds of whales, wolves, and birds are accompanied in the performance by the Paul Winter Consort, several dance companies, and the presence of elephants, lamas,

earthworms, house cats, and blue green algae. Carla Desola and Allan Tung were the original choreographers of the dances the Omega Dance Company performed for this event. During my time as director of Omega, there was a request to find a way to visually create an ocean above everyone's heads. The resulting solution was the choreography of dancers moving with several long 50 foot fishing poles with 30 foot ribbons attached. While we didn't use the concept of the poles for *Ocean Motion* because the theater ceiling was not big enough, this in part inspired a request to the set designer to fly in hanging seaweed that could freely move and be interactive with the dancers as well as the use of props. Problem solving the use of the poles in the *Missa Gaia* and the physical memory of working with these props, gave me the idea to film long tendrils and sea anemones that were projected across a 20 by 30 foot cyclorama surface in the video design for O.M.

A second example of how embodied knowledge and experience became embedded in *Ocean's Motion* was a reflection on choreography I created in 2003 called *Beaches*. This previous dance inspired the idea for filming dance underwater. This was a short dance film shot and edited by my partner Larry Asakawa^{cccxi}. For *Beaches*, I choreographed three dancers on the sea cliffs near the La Jolla Cove in San Diego. To prepare, the dancers and I spent time at the ocean meditating, listening to the rocks and the sound of the water pounding against them, and creating unison movement that reflected lines etched in the sandstone that marked layered sediment over hundreds of years. In looking at photos that triggered memories of the choreography, I remembered how the movement was in relation to the felt experience of stone and sea. This was the source of the idea for creating a relation with the ocean in O.M. by filming dancers underwater.

In 2005 and 2006 I designed and built a 45 minute dance and video projection installation

called *Submerged Ascension* at Calit2 in Irvine, California. *Submerged Ascension* (S.A.) was a result of a six month long meditation on the La Jolla Cove. The grounding for the projection design for the Deep Sea section of O.M. The video design for S.A. was primarily focused on images of sea life. This included filming moon jellies at an aquarium however that footage was never used in the actual performance of S.A. In a choreographic workshop I took with choreographer Donald McKayle around this same time, he shared that he always keeps a “bag of tricks” that he can pull ideas out of to recreate or use if they were extras from other dances. This bit of wisdom inspired me to keep the moon jelly shots in a folder titled “parking lot” for unused video edit material. I do the similar process for choreographic phrases, creative ideas, and writing that have been culled from a project because they didn’t quite “fit.” For O.M. I returned to this unused footage and incorporated it as the primary focus of the Deep Sea. Another concept from S.A. that was recreated but reversed had to do with shaping. In S.A., I experimented with small carved pieces of mirrors and projected on those surfaces which in turn spilled projection on hanging sculptured shapes. This shaping idea generated the concept for O.M. to layer the moving jelly fish images with the blue screen of the dancers. More will be discussed later with example images of the layering.

The accumulation of process foregrounds the ability to make the hour long production in such a short period of time. In regards to Renov’s ideas of subjectivity and embodied knowledge in film, the “real” experiences of previously making work generated new spanda and in some cases actual material for this performance. The gathered experiences entered the “discourse” of the creative process and interacted as a “compass” in the projection design. Accumulation is an act of waiting and a way of non-linear thinking with great potential. As described above, material explored in the creative process is not always used but can be inserted or reimaged in future

works. Meditation has taught me a kind of patience and waiting that does not hurry along this process. When I set to meditate, sometimes my mind is so busy I don't land in silence right away or if I have a question I'm trying to figure out, the answer does not always emerge immediately. I have learned over time to sit quietly and the experience of silence or answers will eventually be revealed. In this way, when I make video, I trust that by listening, being patient, and continuing to do the art form, nothing is ever lost because the material will be available for another project.

The accumulation also extends beyond what is visible in the final screen edit. Many artists and individuals perspectives are present in the video projection design by giving feedback on filming or editing, creative discussions about process that happen throughout, and the behind the scenes presences of set up and organization. In this project Amy Schiffner had provided endless inspiration through her choreography, staging, and ongoing discussions about the meaning of the choreography. Sky Fung's presence in performing Sundara brings the underwater character to life by infusing the video with her fresh spirit and sense of humor. My partner and filmmaker Larry Asakawa contributed numerous hours pouring through the edit with me shot by shot at various stages and having long discussions trying to get to the raw heart of what was being communicated in each second.

The question of "which sea" came up during the creative process. We decided to stay with the Pacific, specifically local Hawai'i and also the West California/Mexico coastline as these land masses framed the same body of water and these were the shores where the creativity was happening on. In video making, I may be responding to a set design need, color palette, or larger structural narrative of the story being told. Poetically speaking, there is a vibrating wave of cause and effect between imagined thought, action in the making of movement choreography,

and the filming and editing of images for the screen. This vibration is spanda and the artistic elements then bounce off of one another and inform choices.



Figure 5.21: Reflective image from the pool shoot ^{cccxi}

As Sundara was the main character, I had the concept to film the dancer who played Sundara underwater, with lots of fabric trailing. My idea was for the underwater choreography to be blended with images of multiple spaces in the ocean. One of Massey’s theories on the concept of “space” proposes that conceiving of “space as a static slice through time, as representation, as a closed system”^{vi} is a way of controlling it. As I meditated on this in the preproduction phase of the film, I considered that part of what I think film uniquely does is creates the visual possibility to see multiplicity across what we might conceive of as bound geography through connecting a wave of images in a flow of different spaces and time. This happens in the way a video projection adds dimensional perspective combining the stage space with the film space. Two locations such as dancers filmed underwater at a pool and dancers performing live on a stage can be seen at the same time. This live stage and filmic action combined in a production has the

potential to create a duet between the dancing body and technology. The video projection establishes place in the sense that the projection on the cyclorama can portray another part of the world. Present in the O.M. video were sea creatures and underwater locations from San Diego, Baja California, and Hawai‘i. Multiplicity can be seen in the way edits are linked together. A video can be shot in multiple locations and bring a sense of different geography into a production. Examples of these concepts working in O.M. will be discussed below. What I was experimenting in the film was to create a kind of unbound flow. Rather than containing the image in one environment, I played with mixing movement images across multiple spatial environments.

We literally had no budget to make the video. I invested in a small PowerShot D10 underwater photo/video camera that the local Hawai‘i dive shops recommended. I story boarded the concepts. My thinking was that a blue background in a pool could serve like a blue screen in the edit for mixing in sea creature footage. Sky Fung agreed to the role of Sundara and I invited Asawaka, an Emmy award winning filmmaker, to shoot this section. Asakawa was generous to donate his time, expertise as a underwater cameraperson, and very experienced breath-hold freediver to this experimental makeshift production. We first did a concept shoot in a private pool. The process was one of trial and error. We both filmed, however the cubes and lines of the pool sides were obvious in the edit. Also there was not enough space in the small pool to get distance.

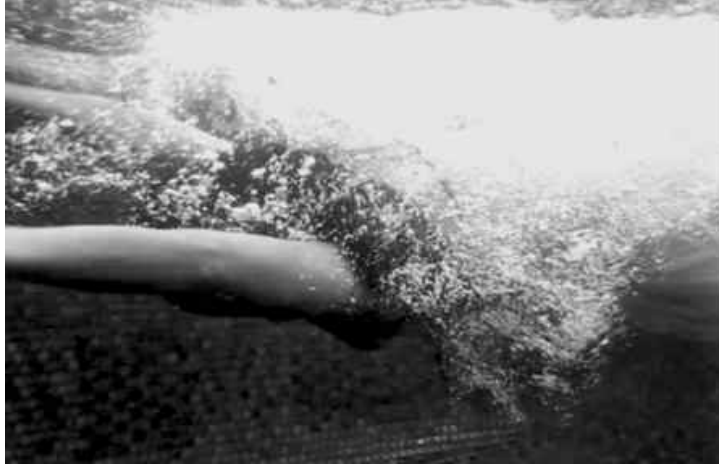


Figure 5.22: Initial test shots of Sundara ^{cccxiv}

The problem solving for this was to shoot at the deep diving pool where the University of Hawai'i swim team trains. Again, the location of our dance building being on the lower campus helped to shape this idea. By this I mean I would sometimes walk over to the physical education athletic building to have lunch at the L&L Hawaiian Barbecue. The café looks over the swim and diving area. One day as I was reflecting on the video projection design dilemma over a plate of lau lau and mahi mahi, I looked out at the diving pool and realized that would be the perfect solution to the depth and distance needed to get an expansive image for the projection. Amy's husband Dave was a swim coach and he helped us make connections with the faculty. The swim department was very accommodating and we scheduled two shoots on days the pool was not in use for competitions and training.

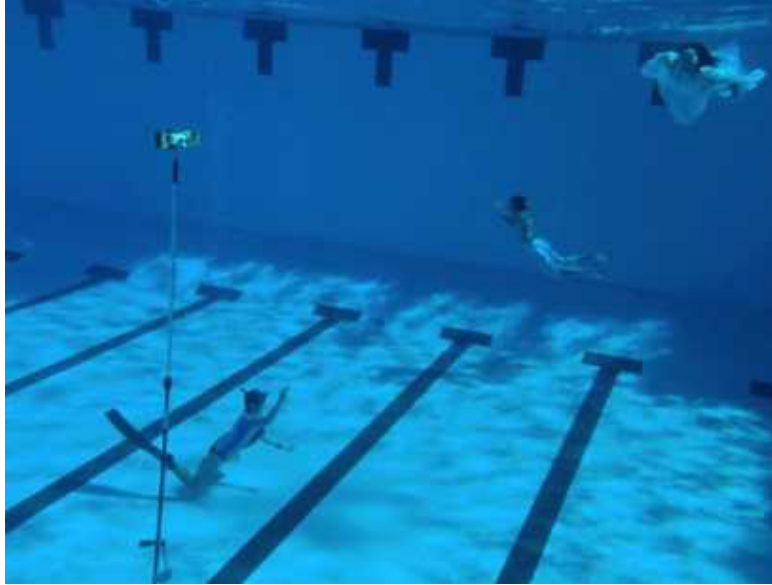


Figure 5.23: U.H. Mānoa Dive Pool. Filming Dancers Underwater. ^{cccxv}

Since we were without a budget and access to professional underwater gear, Asakawa and I came up with a makeshift plan. We went to City Mill, the local Oahu hardware store, and bought two twenty foot blocks of blue paint tarp. This was to tie together to create a forty foot blue screen wall underwater at the pool. We also bought a paint roller with a long 15 foot handle. We tied the paint roller to a light weight \$30 tripod and attached the photo cam to the top of the handle. Once in the water, we used dive pool weights to ground the tripod base to the bottom of the pool floor.



Figure 5.24: Creative blue screen made from City Mill blue tarp. ^{cccxvi}

In September 2011 we filmed at the dive pool with five dancers including Brendin Brown, Mercedes Johnson, Nicole Lam, Malia Yamamoto, and Sky Fung. Even though there was only one Sundara character, I was not sure how long the dancers could withstand being underwater and I wanted safety first. They were all strong swimmers, there was a lifeguard, and we made sure to have buoys handy in the water when they would come up for air. In the end, each dancer looked so photogenic in the video that we decided to expand the cast on the video projection to “Sundara and Water Spirits.”



Figure 5.25: Stills from Underwater Video ^{cccxvii}

For the filming sessions I wrapped my shot list in saran wrap and kept it by the edge of the pool for reference. I jumped in the water with the dancers and we worked out the choreographic gestures on the spot. One of the dancers, Brown, was also a member of the swim team. He provided some beautiful long underwater dives due to his technical experience.



Figure 5.26: Dance Sequence Shot List ^{cccxviii}

After the shoot I took the footage and imported it into Final Cut Pro 7 Editing Software. I blended the moon jelly video images I had shot with the dancers, and incorporated the still shots from the Aquariums as well.

In the performance, the video was rear projected onto the cyclorama. I used two matching “projectors” at 5000 lumens each. There was also one additional project that was located in the back of the theater house and front projected onto scrim. The process of “making” for me involves a circular mode of generating and responding as a shared conversation between artists. As we were choreographing the dance, we left open space and long extended places where no movement would happen to anticipate the presence of a projection design. This was so the dancing action onstage would not compete with the dancing action in the video. Once the video projection was created, we went back through the dance and tweaked the choreography to have moments of reflecting or physically interacting with the movement on the screen. This is a dialogue between the camera and the dancing body as well as an interaction between the

projection design and open or shaped architectural space. In video art, this is a space of rich conversation between cultures and art forms.

Public Performance Engaging Audience Practices: Interaction of Performance Projection Design and Dance

As I watched the video projection design begin to take shape with the dancers on stage and the set design, I asked, the following questions. How does one understand the experience of what was originally a physical sweating and breathing three dimensional live dance event through a mediated flat screen two dimensional digital image? What does it mean for the main character of a live performance event to be a flat screen image?

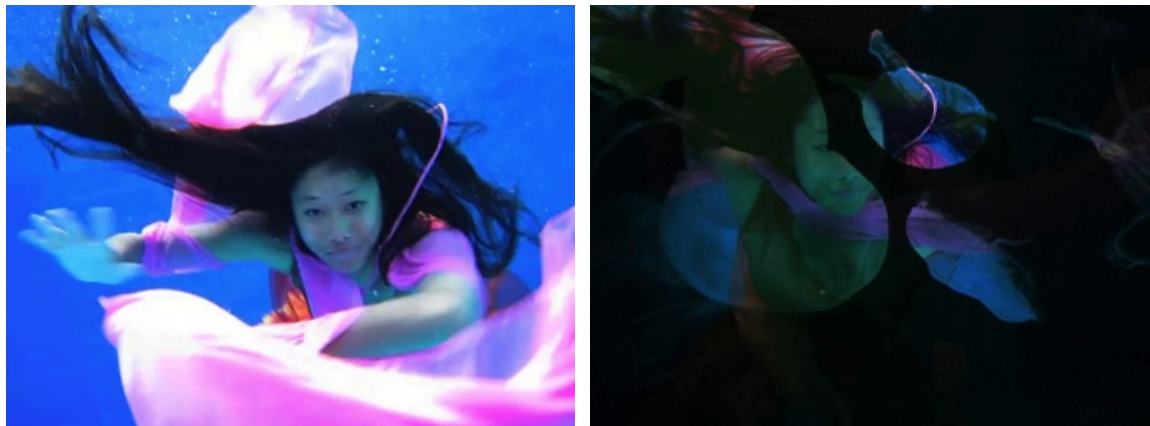


Figure 5.27: Video projection design edit sample mixing pool footage with aquarium jellyfish images. ^{cccix}

The synergy of dance in visual media offers different aesthetic and technological concepts of time and space on screen and opens out somatic experiences as ways of comprehending being. In *Ocean's Motion*, choreography was occurring on stage simultaneous

with the video. There was a lot going on visually at the same time which gave the audience options for choice in what to view. As I experienced a performance as a seated audience member during one of the shows, I thought that our current frameworks for “seeing” video projection design in live performance might shift to include “perceiving” the moving body in digital media. This disrupts the clichés of viewing and presentation and changes the somatic relationship of the audience to the moving image. Ways of “Seeing” and “perceiving” or feeling dance in video could also be understood through yoga techniques for centering the mind. Examples are outlined below.

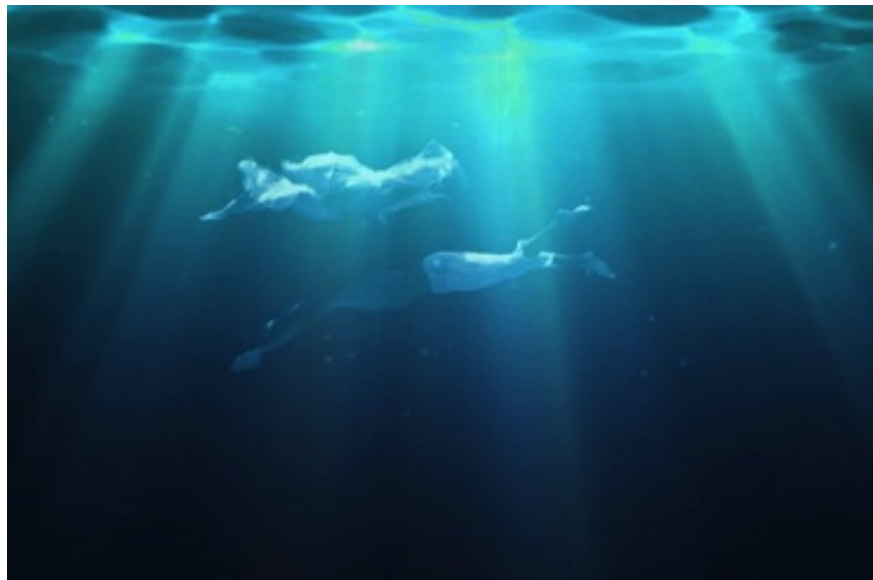


Figure 5.28: Opening scene from the projection design on the cyclorama during the performance. ^{ccccx}

The experience of centering in projection design can be compared to hatha yoga classes. All hatha yoga classes I have taken include a period of focus on centering. This usually includes a chant or a meditation to set the tone for the rest of the class. The flow of breath is established

and the mind begins to quiet down. The body begins to slowly warm up as a result of consciously connecting the breath with posture. I also apply these active techniques as an audience member. Whenever I go to see a show I shift into a reception mode. I bring with me my senses, my culture, my history, and my dance training. I engage not only as a viewer, but also as an active participant in this time and place. The performers onstage or onscreen in this example of *Ocean's Motion* in projection design are the storytellers and together we are transported to the source of the creative intent behind the show. I consider myself less of a spectator and more of an audience performer, a collaborative storyteller, as I dance alongside and with the dancers on stage in my mind and being. A sensorial responsive experience emerges within me. I engaged with the production with all my senses and listen with my eyes, my ears, my mind, my body, and my whole being to receive what is being communicated.

As an audience member in O.M., the longer I viewed the projection design on stage, the more I began to realize that I felt my body relax more and more. I had a somatic experience of the technology. I observed the ocean wave and I felt as if I was out on the sea. I felt my spine lengthen in my chair. And as I watched the dancers breathe as they sang and danced, I became aware of my own breath in return. The longer I watched, I found my mind was drawn to the center of my being to a place that was deeper than skin or bone or tissue. In that center I connected to an internal rhythm and had the experience of an image of a source of light that seemed to flow from the dancers bodies to mine. In that moment of awareness, I bathed in the golden sun of the movement and a feeling that the ocean creatures had come to me for a visit through the vessel of this projection design. Through bodily transmission I hear, receive, and feel something. For now I am calling that something synergy, an experience of being in and out at the same time, where all the elements come together to create a greater whole than myself. That

feeling of connectivity is also a somatic experience of centering. In yoga it might also be called the experience of witness consciousness. The experience is the mind's observation of images and thoughts flowing.



Figure 5.29: Live performance with the projection design. ^{cccxix}

Harmony Bench suggests that the criticism of digital dancing bodies in a “move from stage to screen” is about abandoning “precisely what makes live performance appealing: risk, spontaneity, ephemerality.”^{cccxii} In this way, media is seen as altering the experience of the live human body in motion in a way that lessens the appeal. In the *Ocean's Motion* projection design, visual media does indeed shift the ephemeral nature of movement in live performance by bringing the body into an altered space of the frame and disjunction of time. Video filming changes the live recorded dance event into a new performance in the archive, in effect reinventing the living memory into a different cultural artifact. However the idea that a “move from stage to screen” alters live performance implies a stereotypical perspective that the medium of the body in digital media is the same as live stage performance. Much of live video projection,

screenance, or even the re-imagining of documentation video memories of live performance are, I would propose, an entirely different medium for which the dance media makers are only beginning to develop an articulated language for. In spite of this difference in medium though, I think there might be something shared in the process of perceiving action in live and digital performance happening on stage at the same time as it did in O.M.

Part of my intention for the video was a hope that the performers and audience would make links and find somatic interconnectivity and a centering between the consciousness of the ocean and humanity. Interconnectivity and centering are words that suggest, in the language of dance terminology, the idea of weight shifting, openness, balance, and flow. A performance is in the process of actualizing culture. The production of *Ocean's Motion* is more than a representation of a cultural artifact or historical moment, it is a living entity that shifts, opens, balances, and flows in the process of becoming with each person who experiences it.

I share this observation because I think it points to easily identifiable ways in which our senses inform how we “see” environment perceptually. I use the video projection design in *Ocean's Motion* and the focus of centering with a performance as an audience member to preface and foreground how I personally relate to theories of the embodiment of perception in Alva Noë's work on sight and perception, which I believe are linked to somatics and meditation in the experience of live dance.

This is not a scientific analysis of what is happening neurologically in the brain or body, rather it is the idea to consider entertaining what it means to view video performance from a point of view of local internal individual “place” based on somatic sense memory and corporeal experience, rather than “seeing” as an activity of action happening in a picture externally in “space.”

In his chapter “Pictures in Mind” from the book “Action and Perception,” Alva Noë’s chief premise is that the sense of touch, rather than sight, is a primary way we consider perception because it is through our “capacity for action” that our perception becomes a whole bodily experience. Noë argues that perception is “not like the content of a picture; the world is not given to consciousness all at once but is gained gradually by active inquiry and exploration.”^{cccxxiii} He proposes that perception is a combination of the sensation of the senses and an “understanding of experience” over time. I identify this “understanding of experience” over time as “place.” “Place” is a site of how I understand the world through my experience of the senses. The example of how I learned to use my senses to navigate moving through and relationship to my environment is part of what informs my perception of the present. In every moment I am actively engaging all of my senses and constantly changing my sense of “place” as I continue learning. I think that each of us has a different internal map that defines “place” related to the sensory experience of environment. When we observe a performance, each individual’s “pictorial” relationship to the production is entirely different based on our unique past and present understanding of sensory experience.

As a viewer of the projection design, what I connect with in the performance of the edit is that I have the sensation of shooting and editing physically alongside the different shot angles in the film from my experience of “place.” Much like Foster’s discussion of the “kinesthetic impact of performance” in live events, when I “see” the camera angles, I “feel” my own sensation of touch holding a video camera as a physical sensation in my “bones, ligaments, and joints.” I experience the film from the point of view of local internal individual “place” based on somatic tactile sense memory of my own activities shooting.

After performances of O.M., various audience members shared different experiences of the video projection design. Some people felt there was too much happening onstage and they did not know how to take in the video projection and the live dance at the same time. Others expressed that they felt the video projection brought the ocean to the stage and the projection design happening alongside the dance at the same time provided a synthesized kinetic and live energy to the performance in a way that would not be possible only through live movement. While there could be many aesthetic explanations for both points of view, what I observed was that many of those who connected with the video projection design also shared they had grown up in the ocean or they were involved with making digital media. However I think the idea of “connection” goes beyond mere shared subject interest. Perhaps the perception of O.M. for those who have the experience of swimming, fishing, or living near the sea, or those who regularly shoot and edit video, comes from “place” in the way that I think Noë proposes that perception is a combination of the sensation of the senses and an “understanding of experience” over time in physical memory, and from the “sensible experience” of Foster’s ideas on the kinesthetic impact of performativity. The feeling of liveness could also be coming from 20th century dance critic John Martin’s ideas about “inner mimicry” (as in the tactile viewing response of yawning or laughing) and perhaps one could connect the idea that “mirror neurons” firing in response to viewing a familiar behavior of swimming in the sea or creating digital media has an effect on a sense of connectivity to this kind of digital presence on screen. Presenting projection design images that reflect the local place give an audience the opportunity to participate in the production by visually and physically “centering” on felt memories.

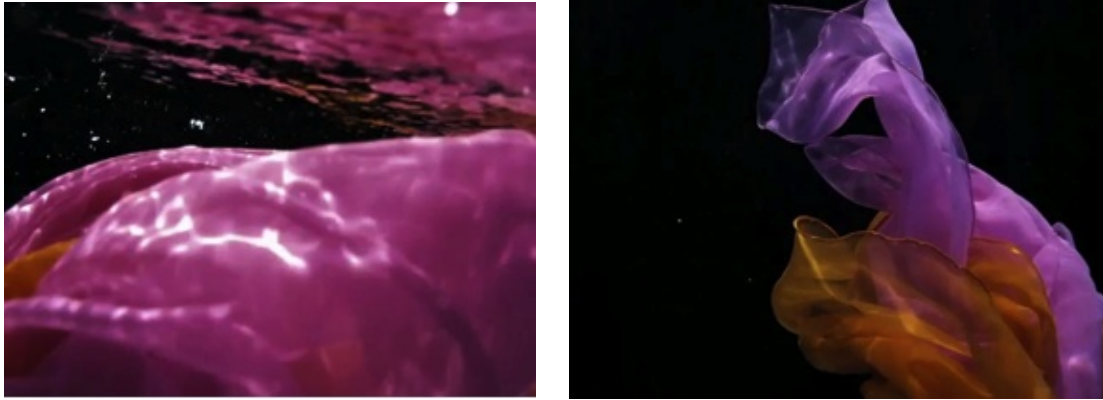


Figure 5.30: Stills from projection design images used for transitions. ^{cccxxiv}

In these previous examples of O.M. there is a kinesthetic impact that could be understood as a similar process of perception and experience in the different spaces of “live” and “screen.” Dancers of different ages have told me that they either love this kind of filmic editing work that involves quick cut, disjointed time, and a mixing of camera angles in various forms of dance media such as video projection for live stage performance/re-imagined video memories/screen dance, or they hate it. My general observation has been that usually younger generations connect with it and older generations tend to not have a way in, though this often depends on their experience of technology. I believe that people who have a way into the presence of dance in media connect because part of how they view from their internal “place” comes from the sense memory of working with technology. Video cameras have become cheaper and more widely available for consumer experimentation and documentation and uploading to youtube requires basic editing skills in simple software applications like i-movie or quicktime. In this example the difference of kinesthetic relation between a viewer of a live dancing body or a digital body is that with media, the kinesthetic activity adds a layer of perceiving technology as an extension of bodily experience. More people than ever before are having the tactile sensation of shooting and editing digital images and I think this contributes in part to how a particular generation or audience is creating a new connectivity to digital bodies on screen. Just as Foster suggests

“viewers trained in a specific form of dance will “dance” along more intensively” while watching performance visually, “than if they are not,” the same applies to dancing bodies in digital media. I think viewers of dance and media who are trained in technology, even at a basic level, will have a way into new ways of perceiving “along” various forms of the digital bodies on screen “more intensively” because they “sense” the action within themselves. From this perspective, the shift from stereotypical ways of “seeing” to “perceiving” the screen then is a move that is “contingent” in part to the accumulation of viewer’s physical experience with technology over time.

Noë also describes the idea that vision has been traditionally associated as a “pictorial process” or a “snapshot conception,” but that technically there are “blind spots” in our vision that the mind fills in.^{cccxxv} He proposes instead that “seeing is much more like touching than it is depicting”^{cccxxvi} as our previous experiences through the sense of touch inform what we visually experience through our sight. The tactile experience that a viewer has had of a space or object previously fills in the gap for knowing what is in sight image. He challenges the current stereotype of sight working as a picture of reality in the way he describes “change space”^{cccxxvii} and how the eye does not always detect changes performed right in front of it.

This kind of “change space” example brings into question what we see, or think we see with our eyes. I am interested in building upon the idea of video projection design in performance as “pictorial process” or a “snapshot conception” because of I think what is currently happening in some examples of video projection of dance relates to a creative process that might be understood more easily if we approach the performance of the media from an understanding of the internal “place” of sensory experience rather than the “space” of an external picture. The narrative of the O.M. video projection images were non-linear. The video editing

was not cut in real time or in sense of telling a story through a continuous framing of activity. The video edit is created as a response to the ephemeral performance by creating a series of images from a place of sense memory.

The slicing of time and quick jump cuts in O.M. I think also relates to Noë's ideas about "change space." While he is specifically making the point that the human eye does not always "see" or "perceive" changes in the field of view in front of it, I would expand this idea to the jump cuts in the projection design. I notice the changes and difference in Sundara swimming across the screen from left to right and then in the next frame emerging from the bottom of the screen, so it is not quite the same as Noë's notion of "change space." However, my mind fills in the blanks because I know what it feels like to swim and dive through water horizontally and vertically therefore I don't need to "see" it in the video to make order out of it. I sense it from my "place" of tactile experience.

The way we create meaning and attribute value to actions in the world directs the way we see and perceive. In the hybrid form of moving dance images on film and video, there is an imprint of physical being coming from both the moving body on screen and the body behind the camera. Framing bodies on screen presents a shared interactive corporeal meaning making process between maker, performer, and viewer. The visual construct is about more than an image. Perception is more than thinking, it involves sensory awareness and memory. There is a relationship between seeing, meaning, and being. The entire body is involved in the process of meaning making and images.



Figure 5.31: Performers in O.M. ^{ccccxxviii}

In the performance of O.M., there were intersections and lines between crafts. There was an unfolding conversation on the stage between the blending of live recorded dance that included projection design, with live movement on the stage. Live performance privileges the ephemeral. Live performance is risky. It's spontaneous and a passing moment that happens in the present tense. Anything can happen onstage and as an audience member you are there with the performers creating the experience together. When a dancer's body appears in a video in projection design, the video itself becomes an object that is a re-performance, or a re-imagined moment in time and space. Both were happening simultaneously on the stage.

Whether I am in the role of a spectator as a spectator in the audience of a live event or a film, I see myself participating with the dancer in the making of meaning out of the performance. As an audience member I am a performer. The dancer or filmmaker shares something with me rooted in his or her own experience and I understand this performance based in my own background or place of moving. We listen and shift with one another. We have a conversation. In dance we sense each other's presence. That sensing creates an embodied conversation between us. After the encounter has taken place, we are both changed. Because we are changed, the

world around us is different. The performance of *Ocean's Motion* on screen and on stage affects the visibility of the story itself as it is in the process of a negotiation between the viewer, the dancer, the screen, somatic memory and a kinesthetic living bodily experience. The relationship between the viewer and the performance is an interaction between the dual temporality of action and meditation on image that affects perception and creates synergy.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter I have used the 'two voices' approach of storytelling and non-linear thinking to share a performance as research theory offering my experiences of yoga in the making of a dance production that included choreography and video projection design. The aim of this chapter is to describe one view of a practice as research process. The research questions I have tried to answer are: 1) What are the experiential aspects of how yoga can be central to a creative process involving generation and response strategies in collaboration with environment, other performance makers, and with the audience? 2) How does place shape creative process? 3) How is experimenting with yoga philosophy and asana in art making a way of knowing and creating a relation with the body, Self, and earth through movement? 4) What is the relationship between an audience and kinesthetic empathy?

The first section of this chapter examined the experiences of yoga in the creative process through the non-linear thinking around spanda, bhakti, meditation, and breathing in relation to the storytelling of place in the making of *Ocean's Motion*. The second section focused on these strategies of spanda and meditation in the making of a video projection design for O.M., and explored how listening with the senses through yoga practice and viewing the filming and editing process are both active meditations. This section also suggested that this process of

understanding many ways of “seeing” and “perceiving” or feeling dance in video could also be understood through yoga techniques for centering the mind in a production and as an audience participant in the storytelling. These concepts were then explored in relation to Michael Renov’s notions of engaging memory as a way into thinking about selfhood in the story of identity and Alva Noë’s premise that the sense of touch, rather than sight, is primary in understanding the experience of the senses in the story of the body.

This kind of practice as research is a way of understanding place. In the example of the story of *Ocean’s Motion*, it is one way of articulating the experience of yoga in dance. The purpose of providing this example is to contribute to and build an understanding of how yoga practices, as non-linear thinking, can relate to the the story of an understanding of place in creative process. I discussed and demonstrated how yoga journaling, the listening for inspiration of spanda through the body in improvisation and choreography, and witness consciousness in video dance making may be put in to relation to a dance production are examples and approaches that I hope will inspire other dancers to examine their own experiences in the creative process.

CHAPTER SIX

NAMASTE: EXIT FROM PERFORMANCE SPACE

In the spirit of performance and performativity, I exit the space of this paper with gratitude.

There
is something that moves
around and through us
which can only be communicated
in the way a body gracefully arcs up and over though space
or hurls itself
with mad thrashing into the ground.

To practice art
is to know the fleeting presence of mystery
emerging from the yet unformed.

Time. Place.

Here.

Now.

Then and There.

a
 b
 o
 d
 y
 of
 words makes
 up the face of
 this O O hhhh so
 beau t iful
 land sca pe of
 heart and
 soul and breath

Thank you to the muse, your inspiration is endless.

Thank you dear reader for sharing this journey with me in the time and space of this dissertation.

Namaste, Kara

APPENDIX A

I include a lot of storytelling of memories from my childhood, teenage years, and young adulthood in the Appendix because reflecting on how I was raised is part of the research that informs the way I think about approaching this dissertation. The fragments of these stories are pieced together with love to make the beautiful mythology and truth of how I see myself and situate who I am in relation to the world today. Remembering the way I learned to be in the world helped me continue to understand how I receive and think about yoga.

JOURNAL ENTRY

April 4, 2011

Honolulu, Hawai'i

7am

“Today as I sat for meditation my mind was zooming. My thoughts were like a high speed chase on the California 405 highway. What should I wear to school today? I have to teach Dance in World Cultures, that’s a lecture class so I better wear my nice floral print, but there is also the technique so I need to pack my black sweats and a soft tee. Don’t forget to skype in to class at 11am. Note to self – bring headset. This apartment is so small. Better stop at Down to Earth and pick up veggie lasagna for dinner.

Somewhere in the middle of this traffic jam in my mind I remember to breathe. When I direct my mind from the fast pace review of my day’s activities to my breath, my thoughts stop chattering.

Breathe in.

I listen with my mind and whole body to my breath.

In the moment of experience my abdomen fills up with air and I feel the breath travel through my lungs while expanding my chest. My bones draw in towards my lungs.

Breath out.

On the exhale there is a slight sensation of air traveling out through my mouth and tongue. My skin feels tingly.

The longer I focus on my breath, the more I become aware of how my body feels. My spine lengthens, each vertebrae stacking up one on top of the other, and I begin to be aware of the velour surface of the couch I am sitting on. I realize I’m tensing my shoulders and so I allow them to relax.

Breathing in, Breathing out.

Then I become aware of the birds outside my window. How did I not hear them ten minutes ago? How did the noise of my mind drown out the loud tick of the wall clock in the room? For the first time that morning I smell the fresh coffee I ground earlier. In the performance of quiet in my mind, I become aware of the reverberations of body and environment.

Then there is only the sensation of stillness inside and movement outside.

My mind stops. I hear birds, I smell fresh coffee, I feel the velour couch fabric, my breathing occurs naturally, and my mind is quiet. I exist in this state of being for about ten minutes.

s
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c
e

Towards the end of my meditation, a feeling emerges of being drawn towards something. Here is how I describe this feeling:

A gentle lightness inside.
So beautiful and sweet.
Full of Light. Light. Joy. Breath.
Flowing like water in a deep sea of self.
I feel drawn to be in the dance studio. To choreograph and make a new work.

My eyes open and I stand up to start the day.”

JOURNAL ENTRY

April 10, 2011

“hmmmm...Oceans Motions. The leafy seaweed dragon is my favorite water animal. And it is a good theme for kids. I have access to hundreds of hours of underwater footage from my favorite surf bros that we could be use and also some footage I shot of Australian seahorses from the Birch Aquarium in La Jolla that could be transformed into some kind of moving painted background projection design.

JOURNAL ENTRY

April 11, 2011

Shoot a dance sequence underwater down by Sans Souci beach?
Get down with weight belts. Looking up towards the reflecting light towards the top of

the water. Create a large distance from the camera at the bottom to the dancers at the top to create the illusion of depth
Could be a projection design behind movement but not too many dancers here are water people who could spend hours in the sea
A piece about fluidity

JOURNAL ENTRY

April 13, 2011

Maybe no live stage movement but instead make a dance film
The water connects the edges of the land we live on.
Film dancers with diye lights at beaches in both locations in San Diego and Hawai'i
Float the dive lights
The flame against the moving body creates texture
Somehow representing the light of the heart, the sparkle of the setting sun on the sea, the generations of warmth even though the ocean is cool

JOURNAL ENTRY

May 1, 2011

Bhakti.

That is the feeling I want to express.
How can I express a feeling of bhakti towards the ocean onstage?
And not only the ocean but presence in the ocean.
And not only presence in the literal ocean but in the ocean of consciousness.
Performing puja to the sea

JOURNAL ENTRY

May 4, 2011

Mirabai! I saw you today in my mind as I was washing dishes.
Well, at least it was someone's painted imagination of you.
In my mind's eye, I saw the sea lapping at the shore. Then I saw the form of a book emerge from sand
granules underneath the water and slowly a picture of you became evident on the cover of the text.
The message...
Look at bhakti poetry for inspiration. Maybe it is Mirabai or maybe another grouping.
Mirabai is who I know but maybe this is pointing to some other work I'm yet to be familiar with

JOURNAL ENTRY

May 6, 2011

As I meditate on these verses, I see in my imagination a dancer swimming in the ocean in a video projection design that could relate to and have a conversation with live dancers on stage. As if the ocean on a video projection high above the stage is the clouds and a dance video projection design character is providing her protection in the form of tears cascading down to dancers on a

stage. The tears turn into sparkling diamonds of a sea of knowledge. The Tiruviruttam poem is abstractly sparking a different kind of idea for the structure of a video projection design on stage.

JOURNAL ENTRY

May 7, 2011

I'm used to choreographing for vast spaces. At the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and other large churches and synagogues in NYC I was always responding to architecture with large mass dance choirs. Something about this relationship of architecture and large bodies of people moving through space is needed for this ocean piece. The work on Hildegard and how her music related to the "greening power" of the earth is part of this as well.

JOURNAL ENTRY

May 10, 2011

Ocean Dreams over the past few weeks

*You came to me in the form of a whale and asked me to hold on tight we dove under the crests of oncoming waves and soared to the bottom of the sea my lungs had air in freedom when we reached the darkest place a fire was lit and the ancient one said you are always welcome here after some time the wisdom of the whale floated me back to the surface and thus I stayed.

*Under the light of the milky way you held my hand and we dove under the sea deliciously kicking our feet swimmingly towards the tallest mountain i have ever seen and his eyes greeted me as the surge tried to take me onwards he asked me to stay encircling with flowers i said yes and we swam back to the shore. You sat next to me on the beach and braided my hair with yours.

JOURNAL ENTRY

May 14, 2011

I am interested in collaboration.

I am interested in listening, finding movement through a felt somatic sense.
(insert journal entry here about listening to cities – the long island artist statement.)

I am interested in architecture and structure.

I am interested in music.

JOURNAL ENTRY

October 12, 2011

Written at the end of a practice session

I enter the studio, take my shoes off, and change clothes. No one is around so I strip quickly in front of the mirrors into something more comfortable. I take note of the reflection of a body that looks withered from the intensity of a high impact work schedule. My hair is a mess, my eyelids are drooping, and I've gained some weight from the stress of my new job. Somehow I need to

move beyond this feeling of exhaustion so I can tap into energy that will allow creatively to unboundedly flow. The glance in the mirror makes me aware of a desire to relax my body and move into a space where I can be an empty vessel for masculine and feminine energies to move through me.

I pull out audio speakers and set up my ipod. Then I sit quietly for meditation. I close my eyes and sit cross legged on the floor. I hear the sound of the rickety old fans overhead whirring but all else is quiet. I bring the awareness of the focus of my mind from the fans to the feeling and sound of the breath in my body. I notice that the pattern of breath in is at first feels tight and shallow in my lungs.

My mind begins to wander to everything I just read on facebook. Note to self, never read facebook before going into the choreograph otherwise I'll end up in New York having a latte and dessert with my friends rather than being present in the studio. Unless of course I want to make a dance about cheesecake. Breathe.

Again, I practice bringing my focus back to the feeling and sound of my breath. As I do so, my breath deepens and expansively fills my lungs deeper and deeper with each intake. Observing the repetition of the intake and outtake of the breath develops a visual breath pattern in my mind that helps to harness my thoughts to being in the present. By doing this, I'm able to temporarily let go of work and personal items that don't need to be done right then and there and attend to the purpose of being in the studio in this moment, which is to create movement phrases for Ocean's Motion.

As I continue to focus on my breath, I begin to hear the wind whistle through the folded wooden blinds. Funny, I didn't hear that the first time I sat down for meditation. I hear the leaves in the trees outside rustle and it sounds to me as if the Ocean is in the trees.

I begin to chant OM very slowly and in different pitches. In my opening chanting I invoke Shiva and Shakti, the masculine and feminine energy of creativity to be fully present with myself. My body relaxes as I sense a connection through sound and flow with my body, space, and nature.

After about ten minutes of meditation, I lie on the floor with my eyes closed, arms and legs outstretched like a starfish. I notice the feeling of how the surface of my body touches the flat plateau of the marley floor. I imagine the breath reaching out into the extremities of my fingers and toes and the oxygen rises and falls in my core and limbs. I imagine this breath flowing into the floor and walls and then slowly I turn over on my belly and move into downward dog. The palms of my hands splayed flat on the floor my hips aligned on a diagonal to my feet the breath in my body begins to take a more regularly defined pattered shape in my body. Slowly my weight moves back over my heels and I roll up into tadasana, standing mountain pose. My eyes open and take in the details of the room, a barre that looks crookedly fixed to the far wall 20 feet away and a hairline crack emerging from the ceiling. My mind listens to my breath, my body, the space all at once.

I know I'm here to make some phrases for the sea anemones so I start to visualize these creatures. As I picture their swirling form, I feel an impulse in my hip that sends me into a arcing

pattern diving into the floor and then cycling back up. My movement is initiated by my breath and I play with movement by repeating gestures, repeating these movement breath patterns. I begin to b-pattern over and over while continuously adding a new movement idea to the phrase.

Time seems suspended. I notice the clock and two hours has gone by in what felt like five minutes. I have material memorized in my body because of the repetition and I have enough to take into tomorrow night's rehearsal. I do not need words to transmit this phrase and feeling to the dancers. By bringing them into this space and demonstrating the movement, the transmission of the idea will take form and shape.

APPENDIX B

Writing in the Presence of Ocean's Motion (O.M.): Dance as Felt Memory

The end of this chapter includes my journal notes as I reached back through my creative memories, listened to the sound of OM resound IN my being, and created a dance on the page.

Introduction

Writing is like listening for the intelligence of something.

At first I tried to stand on the paper, to absorb text by osmosis. Then I punched a whole through it with my hand to see if there was something inside. Next I brought the words into my body and tried to spew them like a dance.

Finally, I sat quietly. I began to place words on the paper as if they had a physical shape. That's when I found a way in.

IN

stepping in, dancing in, dwelling in, inside of

Invocation

I invoke love, light, consciousness, and beauty into this space.

I invoke the sweetness of the sea, the inspiration of the goddess, the whirling dervish of my muse, the fluidity of my heart, into this exchange.

I invoke family, dancers, friends, lovers, and the doorways of memory to illumine the words and rivers of text on these pages.

I invoke simplicity.

Invitation

To you my dear reader, I invite you to

Clear the mind.

Take a deep breath.

Feel the way the air moves in your body.

Become aware of how you are sitting, reading these words.
Make yourself comfortable.
Think about how the lines and curves of your body meet the surface of what you are sitting on.
Breath in,
Breath out.
Open your gaze to rest softly on these pages.

Entering of Space

I dream that I am standing in a pool of light at the doorway or threshold of a ritual event.
It is my life.
No time or place identified.

I feel the warmth of the hot sun streaming rays of particle light on my hair.
My body feels open.
My form momentarily dissolves.
There are no edges to my skin, to this doorway, to the end of the universe.

A spiral of orange golden glow thrusts out of my core and I shift my weight,
Jarred back to self
I stand, feet parallel, in this swaying rhythm.
Centering.
Breathing.
Connecting to oxygen.
Making space for the place between the breaths.
Present in my truth.

It's all about the L to the O V E is what I hear someone calling.
My muse. I recognize her presence.

O

rhythm of my feet, vibration of my soul, opportunity to remember

Offering

	Offering of flowers	
words like flowers		words like ghee poured into a fire
spices of kum kum and tumeric		offering of abundant resources
	offering of my body and self to my muse	

Divining

My MUSE comes to me in my dreams.

SHE speaks to me in pictures and gives me ideas in the form of images.

My muse is a SHAPE SHIFTER and sometimes I hear her voice in the coo of the morning dove as I wake in the morning.

When I have an inspiration for an idea, the moment is like plugging into an electrical socket and everything FLOWS.

My muse is the goddess of abundance, the east coast GREEN color of the trees, the magic of the unexpected dragonfly buzzing in front of me, the GENTLE flight of the hummingbird, the architecture of space and time.

My muse is MUSIC,

as in the sound of an Imam chanting over a loudspeaker in Turkey
the metallic rhythm of a New York subway drummer pounding on echoing air
the funky groove of a blues singer with a cracked smokey voice
or the sweet notes of a flute playing shri krishna

My muse INSPIRES me through her melodies and creates a sandbox for me to play in through her compositional form.

She VISITS me when I call her.

I call her through the opening of my HEART,
the longing to be one with the world around me,
the desire for UNITY.

I call her by writing in my journal,
I call her by singing and chanting,
I call her by swimming in the ocean,
I call her by volunteering my time in selfless service,
I call her by putting both feet bare on a wooden studio floor and carving space with my arms,
I call her by being present in community and gathering everyone's felt gratitude and concerns in a sweeping arm gesture,
I call her and she APPEARS.

or in other words:

MUSE
SHE

SHAPESHIFTER
FLOWS
GREEN
GENTLE
MUSIC
VISITS
HEART
UNITY
APPEARS

Emerging from Wetness

As an artist I see myself as a weaver of unspeakable tales.

I feel an embodied presence undulating beneath the surface of a glassy wave of ideas. A secret floating in the deep sea of self wanting to roll over the curling lip of imagination. I create to make an ocean flower garland of meaning and form.

My critic sometimes likes to play with my muse and blocks my flow of inspiration.

My critic is a tight rubbery wetsuit that doesn't fit quite right. It hangs low at the crotch making me feel uncomfortable when I try to walk, it draws my shoulders back in a high arch so that my breath doesn't flow naturally, and it makes me feel like a fat shoreline seal about to give birth.

My creator slashes that rubber open with a jack knife and lets the cool skin of vulnerability reveal itself. My creator is naked with nare even a bikini to hide underneath. I am free to expose myself and slip into the fresh water of creation without being hindered by layers of thickness.

M

memories, muse, om

Call and Response

MUSE

Age Now.

My creator, my muse, creates a doorway for me to embodied presence.

I recently read a quote from a Cineaste Magazine interview with Japanese Filmmaker Akira Kurosawa that defines for me what creativity is all about. Kurosawa said, “What I meant to say is that some of the essential scenes of this film are based on my wondering how God and Buddha, if they actually exist, perceive this human life, this mankind stuck in the same absurd behavior patterns...I wanted to see through the eyes of a heavenly being.”

This is the kind of artistry I seek to express in my work. To be able to see something through that which we cannot define or even know if exists, and communicate this understanding to transform and uplift humanity.

SHE

Age 9.
My muse is slippery.

I am bare foot on worn yellow carpet. Breathing in that indescribable nursing home smell mixed with the sweet scent of pink lilies set on the coffee tables around the room, I look around and see the kind eyes and crinkled skin of the nice ladies I will dance for. Despite the fact that I have taken only a few ballet lessons, my mother is inspired to have me improvise to her reading the Genesis story while my father plays environmental music on the piano. Way above my head is a large French window. As the reading unfolds and “light divided the day from the night” I jump up and try to grab the particles in the air that are floating through the sunlight from that window. As I reached my hand above my head, I touch the face of god.

Perhaps the high I feel in this moment is the act of performing for the first time. Or perhaps it is connecting to an invisible place where the wisdom of age present in the retirement home meets the energy of youth in the transcendental breath of movement.

Whatever it is, the power of this a-ha moment sends me to ballet class week after week looking for mystery high and low in pliés and relevés. Sometimes I catch glimpses of her, divinity, seemingly sliding down the barre where she slips into the bodies of dancers, as they port de bras forward.

SHAPESHIFTER

Age 19.
My muse comes to me in the form of a rock.

I am invited to make a ritual dance in choreography class. In my imagination I see circles. I go to central park and the earth speaks to me. There are tiny little rocks of all kinds. I ask them if they would like to be part of a dance performance. For the most part they are agreeable. As I walk I carefully pick up those who want to go and put them into my plastic bag. When I return to the dressing room I wash the couple hundred tiny small stones I have gathered in the white porcelain sink.

In the studio I scatter them into a circle and begin to improvise. This is how I find the choreography. I respond to the rocks.

My body wants to stay close to the floor and I find myself never quite extending any higher than where my waist would normally be. My breath is uneven in this position and my limbs are contorted. I feel animal like. Chaos reigns and I throw the rocks across the floor with my foot. I find a pattern of movement, repeat the pattern, and repeat again until I have memorized it. Around and around the circle I go with a process of listening, responding, and memorizing. Someone knocks on the door and brings their dancers in. Three hours have gone by and my studio rehearsal time is over. I lost track of time as I became absorbed in the rocks. If you asked me what really happened in the space from 1pm – 4pm I could not recall. What I could share with you is the memory of that experience through my choreography. That memory is passed on when I perform the rock dance for a workshop.

The rocks are talking through me to the audience. They do not have words so I do not have words. They have been present on the earth longer than any of us have been present. Their story is very very old.

FLOWS

Age 7.

I associate the sensation of rolling with the feeling of freedom. My muse is the architecture of space and time.

I am a temple kid. By that I mean the church is my playground. I feel safe and inspired in this place. Because both of my parents work here, I spend hours hanging out and exploring every nook and cranny of the building.

I sneak into the sanctuary and dance, skip, play, and run up and down the aisles. I crawl underneath the pews to roll down the slight hill on the floor, thinking of all the people and their favorite “spots” as I pass by their seats. Old cranky 70 year old Ethel who complains that the ministers daughter wears designer clothes on church money (really I only have kmart clothing), Mr. Henry who’s sense of patriotism causes him to demand the American flag in this sacred space every memorial and independence day, Gregory J. who whistles in the hallways and hugs the young girls a little too closely, and kind soft slightly plump Maria, a school teacher, who always listens to you as if you were a grown up. I think of all these people as I continued to roll down the incline.

I know that nothing can contain me in this building so I pretend that I am bigger than this space.

GREEN

Age 12.

My muse is the color green.

Outside my house in Bedford Indiana there is a small woods. I like to walk through this clump of trees and climb down the hill on the other side to the railroad tracks that stretch long through a canyon of limestone.

I walk along those tracks, the wooden planks loose and beveled under my feet, and listen to sounds around me. In the distance I hear the sound of cars on a bridge overhead. Everyone says to be careful of the rattle snakes and copperheads around here but I never see them. We seem to respect each others space and I'm free to crawl around.

I explore a series of rocks and find a bunch of large boulders stacked haphazardly looming high above my head. This unexpected glimpse of natures erratic placement is also marked by human graffiti. Others must come here for solitude as well. Probably mostly young people like myself as I see Todd loves Christie scrawled on the uneven texture of the rocks.

Even though this is a shared space, I have never met anyone here. At least not in person. Perhaps I know a little about them by the marks they have left behind, the bright red of the graffiti arrows painted on the stone or the yellow and black symbol of peace sprayed across the earth. I imagine that they too want to get away from everything they know and create a space that is their own.

I hear the train go by in the distance. The rattle of the tracks reminds me that life is rhythmic and everything has a cycle. I walk back up the hill to return home. My home is a safe and ordered place. It is not wild like it is when I come out here in nature. I love the disorder of the placement of branches growing out of trees. I love the way the green sycamore leaves blow in random patterns. I keep this memory as I return to the order of my home and life.

GENTLE

Age 23.

Children are like a pandemonium play of muses.

I am teaching at the Sacred Heart school in New York City. The kids are running around like mad! Thirty little five year old bodies have taken off their shoes and are frolicking around the ballroom. How am I supposed to teach dance class today and keep any sense of order when they are so excited that tomorrow is Thanksgiving? Leaping, rolling, giggling, teasing, they are out of control.

Quickly I think on my feet. Let's make a winter wonderland dance! Yeah, that's it. They can roll around like snowballs or fall like flakes in any way they want. This is a mesmerizing idea and all the girls hush to think about how they can call the snow.

I turn on the Nutcracker music for the Dance of the Snowflakes. Everyone takes a freeze pose in any shape they want, then slowly they move.

At the same time, outside, gently it begins to snow. Magic.

MUSIC

Age 17.

The spiraling sound of music helps me find my muse in choreography.

A ritual is a spiral in a way. Whether we repeat an act we have known before or whether we are reinventing ritual, we are entering into a space that is already in motion from times, places, energy, movement, and choreography before it. We are constantly reinventing ritual in sound and form.

I am making my first choreographed dance for the stage.

I envision swirling. The root of the dance technique I practice every day in the studio involves spiraling around the spine. I listen to all kinds of orchestral, jazz, and pop music listening for the right piece. Finally I settle on some contemporary electronic music that sounds to me like the pattern of wind picking up rain drops and sending them on the trajectory of an arc. Sometimes when the storms come to Indiana the wind plays with rain and it looks like this kind of movement in the air. I create my choreography following the outline of the music compositional form. The movement reflects the phrasing and melody lines.

I hang over from my waist down and embody the sound. The dance starts upstage left and zig zags horizontally back and forth across the stage until it ends back stage right. I take a white unitard and paint blue and silver swirls on it. The color of blue is like the surface of the deep ocean. I envision sculpturing the space and my parents help me find some odd shaped thin sheet metal that we twist together into 5 foot spirals. I hang one on clear plastic thread. The spiraling metal is vertical and appears as if it is emerging from the floor on the backstage right quarter mark. I hang the other one high above my head and place it horizontally in the air on the upper stage left quarter mark. On the horizontal metal I attach 3 rectangular sheer pieces of hard plastic that loosely spiral around themselves as they hang. The plastic reflects the stage lights as the natural flow of air in theater blows the shapes.

The entire stage and the movement within the proscenium frame look like the sound of the music.

VISITS

Age 14.

My body is engraved with history. My muse performs the writing.

I pull up my pink tights and slide into my black spaghetti strap leotard. My ballet shoes are worn and there is a slight hole beginning to show by my big toe. I walk up the dance studio staircase and sit down with my back against the wall as I watch the class before mine practicing a fast

petite allegro. Ms. Lila's curly red hair is pulled up tightly into a bun and it makes me aware of how loose strands of my wispy blond hair always fall out of my clips during port de bras. My back feels warm against the wooden wall and I spread my legs wide open and drop my chest forward to the floor. I listen to the girls jumping and register my heart beat with their rhythm. There is a sense of timelessness as this ritual of leaping occurs around 6pm every Tuesday. My skin is a bit clammy from the warm sweaty temperature in the studio.

Outside it is October and the leaves are falling quickly. I am safe here. I know that I will return week after week to revisit the perfection of my first, second, and fifth positions. My awareness is very much alive and awake in this place as my only concern here is where the placement of my weight lands between the inside and outside of my foot, and how my knees line up over my toes when I drop into a plié. My focus is clear when I turn and spot the wall to keep my balance. There is nothing like being perfectly balanced in a double pirouette and landing in fourth position croise. In that moment, the universe is in perfect order.

All the clutter of the outside world does not exist in this ritual space. This space, with its painted wooden floor is sacred. As I stretch and prepare my body to enter the exercises that will transport me to a clear mind, I connect to my breath and allow the oxygen to fill all the cells in my hips, thighs, knees, calves, and ankles. Etched in my body is a space of being without words. A quotidian space “ ” of emptiness.

HEART

Age 18.

My muse wears no shoes.

I pull up my black footless unitard and walk barefoot from the dressing room down the hallway at Juilliard to room 320. It's 8am in the morning and no one is here yet. I open the door to the empty studio and see the morning light streaming across the space from the long skinny horizontal windows that are high above the mirrors on the far side of the room. I gravitate toward a warm pool of this light on the floor and lie down with my knees up to my chest. I notice outside the windows a few tree branches are blowing in the wind. Even though this is Manhattan, this glimpse of the blue sky world through the windows makes me think that I could be in India, Africa, or Istanbul. I like the idea that I could be anywhere and everywhere at the same time.

I press my lower back into the wood and gently rock across my spine from side to side. I notice how the surface of my body meets the floor and how my organs are fluid as I gently roll. I stretch my heels vertically up towards the ceiling and lengthen the back of knees and register this upside down perspective of the studio.

My mind is clear. My awareness is connected to my joints and pinpoints the areas that need to be slowly attended to in order to prepare for class. In this space there is no worry of schedules, papers, family matters, bills, work, anxiety, future plans and past memories - this is a sacred space clear of everyday concerns. My body touching the floor blesses the upcoming class and is blessed by it. My thoughts dissolve into the floor like a pitcher of water pouring out the text of

my mind. When I lift my head up to stretch my neck I find a reflection of myself in the mirror. I am surprised that I am even there, present in form.

UNITY

Age 20.

My muse connects and transmits a relationship between body and place.

I am in Indonesia studying Balinese dance with a college summer study grant. I watch a young 13 year old girl perform legong. She stands, knees bent, heels together with the toes slightly arched upward. She wears a golden patterned sarong with a green weave and sways gently transferring her weight back and forth between the left and right foot. Her gestures are round both in big arm movements and tiny finger mudras. I become aware that her dance costume and round movements reflect the ornate temple architecture in which she stands. It is as if the dance is not complete without the temple, nor the temple without the dance.

I wonder how it would be to see this dance on a proscenium stage. Would something be missing without the scent of incenses, the texture of stone in the temple, and the way the pagodas frame the space? Can dances that are originally created in a particular landscape or architecture be transported without losing meaning? How is space different from place?

APPEARS

Age 22.

My muse is the performance of quiet.

I sit cross legged on the cold marble floor. Autumn is here. I watch the yellow leaves blow in the wind. The Brahmins have come from India and are performing a yagna.

The fire ceremony will last several days and people are coming and going. Over a thousand people are sitting in a circle as priests chant sanskrit mantras. I am in a place of timelessness. My being is open and my mind is still. I receive the chant with my entire being and the translation of language is not necessary as on some cellular level I understand the meaning of the sounds.

Offerings are made to the fire. Ghee, flowers, more chants. A Brahmin walks through the sea of people and sprinkles water, throwing it out far into the masses. I receive a few cool drops on my skin and I breathe.

I breath into the space within that has held dance classes, choreography, family, and love. I breath in and allow everything to merge with silence.

Exit from space

There
is something that moves
around and through us
which can only be communicated
in the way a body gracefully arcs up and over though space
or hurls itself
with mad thrashing into the ground.

To practice art
is to know the fleeting presence of mystery
emerging from the yet unformed.

APPENDIX C

Other Water Works: Connectivity in multiplicity

My practice as research study has focused on aspects of my experience and approach to yoga in my creative process in choreography and dance video making of Ocean's Motion. A connective thread I found reflected in this body of work is water. Most of the artistic work I have created since the early 1990s has centered on the theme of oceans, waters, wetness, moisture, or flow. Water is an element that is not fixed. Water is fluid, much like the creative process for me. I like to dive into the current of a project and see where it takes me. While Ocean's Motion stands alone as a singular production, it is actually part of this larger body of work I have created connected to ocean themes. In all of these works, my personal practice of yoga has informed my creative process.

My artwork over the past 20 years is fragmented into several pieces scattered across continents. I have choreographed dance, performed dance, written about dance, filmed and edited video projection designs for the stage, and directed dance films for the screen with multiple collaborators.^{cccxix} Sometimes these projects are funded and received by large audiences, other times they are barebones no budget acts of creativity that only a few ever see. As I meditated on how to write about my creative work in relationship to my yoga practice, I was looking for a connective thread or through line in all the separate pieces. I created multiple visual Tumblr accounts to help me understand and make sense of my own creative process for I find that it is visual images that mirror back to me aspects of myself. In doing so, what I began to think about was that the connective thread was not an acquired object or stand alone product of art making. The connective thread in why I took so many different approaches had to do with my love of the creative process and my approach to the experience of mindfulness and spanda. When looking for or taking on a new work, I follow a feeling or vibration, an experience that is under the surface of visibility. Trying different forms of artistic expression helps me to feel fresh and alive as I seek to understand the world around me.

Past performances include the following performances. In 2003, the choreography for a short experimental film called "Beach Dance" was created in collaboration with documentary filmmaker Larry Asakawa in La Jolla. Three dancers and I spent the day listening with our bodies to the natural elements of the cliff formations at Boomer Beach and developed movement phrases based on our improvisations there. The creation of choreography for the dance "Submerged Ascension" involved two installations. The first installation was a portrayal of beach culture for the stage in 2005 and the second installation included video projection design of water images in a small lab at Cal IT2 at U.C. Irvine. In 2007 I created the choreography and video projection design for "5 Element Theory" at Mira Costa College exploring images of water as fluid force interacting with metal, wood, and wind embodied through movement and video. In the fall of 2009 I designed the video projection design in collaboration with Loretta Livingston's choreography for the live performance production of "Surface" during the Dance Camera Istanbul Festival in Turkey. This work explored the surface of various bodies of water, the body of the sea and the water in our bodies. Various video projection designs and experimental films created between 2005 - 2010 in collaboration with the Minerva Tapia Dance Group in Tijuana

Mexico have involved a relationship with the sea through border crossing issues and transnational connectivity.

Additional choreographic works with themes of water:

1995 – 2002 Missa Gaia: Earth Mass, NYC

1997 In the Beginning, NYC

1998 Hildegard of Bingen, NYC

2005 The Border Starts Here, MEXICO

2005 A Fish Impression, CA

2006 Submerged Ascension, CA

2006 The Watergirl Project Video Project, SRI LANKA

2008 5 Elemental Theory, CA

2009 Ellas Danzan Solas, MEXICO

2009 Surface, ISTANBUL

2011/12 Ocean's Motion, HI

2011 Shifting Sands, FL

2012 Permit me Voyage, HI

2013 Etched, HI

2014 I AM, HI AND FRANCE

2014 2nd Try, KOREA AND FRANCE

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