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Deconstructing Dance Documentation:
An Analysis of Methods and Organizations Devoted
to Archiving Choreographed Ballet Works

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Library Information Science

by

Sonja Carlson

2019

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Sonja Carlson

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Deconstructing Dance Documentation: An Analysis of Methods and Organizations Devoted to Archiving Choreographed Ballet Works

By

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Master of Library Information Science
University of California, Los Angeles, 2019
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Ballet is an ephemeral and experiential performing art whose choreographed works change constantly through performance and interpretation. Despite this constant evolution, archivists and librarians have found numerous mediums to document choreographed works and the greater ballet culture and community.

This thesis surveys current practices and standards within the fields of ballet choreography documentation and preservation to answer the following questions: How are choreographed dances documented in public and private dance archives and libraries? Who are the primary users and how does that influence collecting methods? Which forms of notation and technologies are used in capturing choreographed dances and what does this choice of format say about the utility and accessibility of the archive? Interviews were conducted with dance practitioners and professionals, archivists, and librarians at the Balanchine Trust, Dance Notation Bureau, Ohio State University, New York Public Library Jerome Robbins Dance Division, and Museum of Performance + Design.

Discussions of current collections, projects, and future goals revealed three common mediums of documentation, written notation, video, and oral history interviews, as well as a common practice for archival institutions to partner with dance companies and schools to ensure that their assets are used to inform reperformance. Overall, the choreography and dance research field would benefit from documentation efforts in more diverse locations with additional performance companies. The three documentation methods can be adopted by individuals and research institutions in cities with rich dance communities to create a more informative and diverse set of choreographic primary resources.

The thesis of Sonja Carlson is approved

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2019

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Dance Heritage Coalition	DHC
Dance Notation Bureau	DNB
Dance Studies Association	DSA
Museum of Performance + Design	MP+D
New York Public Library	NYPL
Ohio State University	OSU
San Francisco Ballet	SFB

INTRODUCTION

The documentation of intangible cultural heritage has been a longstanding challenge within the archival community. In its 2003 Convention, UNESCO describes intangible cultural heritage as “traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional craft.”¹ Furthermore, the UNESCO Convention stated, “The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next.”² Intangible cultural heritage is evolutionary because the practices are passed from person to person and generationally change according to the natural circumstances of the community. Because of this, each heritage element selected for safeguarding has a documentation plan tailored to the needs of the community and its traditions. Since UNESCO’s first selections for preservation in 2008, over 500 intangible cultural heritage practices have been targeted for safeguarding and documentation; 180 of these selections are cultural dances, mostly from developing countries.

Very few western cultural elements have been selected for safeguarding, especially within the dance field. Instead, the documentation of western dance falls on libraries and cultural research institutions, but challenges arise when organizations are faced with archiving materials that require substantial interpretation and institutional knowledge. With intangible cultural

¹ UNESCO, “What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?,” <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>.

² UNESCO, “What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?,” <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>.

heritage, a complete understanding may require interpreting and combining multiple mediums, which means a singular document doesn't act as an authoritative source and is instead negotiated between multiple documents. In the case of dance archives, an authoritative source does not exist because no single medium is able to capture all information without fallacy or exclusion. Instead, the mediums used to "fix" the ephemeral and intangible must be balanced and evolve to organically fit the needs of artists, practitioners, and scholars. The documentation process for intangible practices can be resource intensive and require a skill set beyond the standards taught in library and information studies programs because the documentarian is not only preserving but also creating primary sources. These facets complicate the collection and management process, often deterring libraries and archives from venturing into the realm of intangible cultural heritage preservation.

While not at risk like some traditional folk dances, one intangible Western cultural practice worthy of documentation is choreographed ballet. The capture of this particular performing art combines elements of theatre, music, and cultural documentation. Music documentation has existed for centuries through standardized written notation, and more recently through audio and video. As an embodied and performative art, dance documentation must also attempt to incorporate and document knowledge that has accumulated over decades of study and relationships between different figures in the dance community.

The documentation of choreographed ballets serves two primary communities: dance practitioners and dance scholars. Dance scholars, much like music or theatre scholars, frequently have a background in the performing art of their selected study, but the utilization of primary sources are different depending on the end goal: dance practitioners looking to restage a piece

and dance scholars looking to analyze the musicality or stylistic distinctions of a choreographer are both analyzing the details, both have different perspectives and objectives. This dual usage may mean that smaller public and private ballet archives exist alongside larger institutions with more resources and a larger, more diverse user group.

The three mediums commonly found in choreographically-focused collections are written notes or notation, video documentation, and oral history interviews. Written documents have been prioritized throughout the Western world, ignoring communities and cultures that embrace oral or performative history traditions. These types of embodied practices are better captured using video documentation and oral history interviews. Dance performances and rehearsals were captured on film when financially feasible, but the low cost and accessibility of handheld analog and digital video recorders make them common mediums found within dance collections. Oral history became a compelling methodology for documenting and understanding the relationship between individuals and history beginning in the 1960s, and has only grown in popularity and use since then.³ The management of analog and digital video assets, as well as audio files, can be quite resource intensive as artists often have to transfer analog tapes to digital files to avoid irreversible degradation and then oversee the digital files to make sure they do not corrupt and remain accessible. Standards and best practices for the archiving of audiovisual materials are published by groups such as the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)⁴ and

³ Douglas A. Boyd and Mary A. Larson, "Introduction," in *Oral History and Digital Humanities*, ed. Douglas . Boyd and Mary A. Larson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 2.

⁴ Archival preservation standards for a variety of mediums can be found through the NARA website. NARA, "Preservation," NARA, January 12, 2018, <https://www.archives.gov/preservation>.

International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF),⁵ as well as scholars such as Anthony Cociolo,⁶ but these standards are constantly evolving to fit the needs of technology improvements, file formats, and software developments.

When these resource mediums — each considered primary on their own — are combined, they create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Written notes and movement notation contribute unparalleled detail on movement and musicality. Due to their availability, accessibility, and utility, digital materials are quite abundant, especially as choreographers continue to advertise their process and works on social media platforms, and these audio and video documents also offer a peek into the creative process of the artist at work. Performance videos, when available, allow researchers to witness the unique differences between each dancer’s execution of the steps. Finally, oral history interviews illuminate the emotions, relationships, and culture that contributed to the creation of the choreographed work, rounding out the multimedia practices of dance documentarians. Because capturing the intangible, ephemeral, and embodied is challenging, there is a lack of specific resources that have been compiled in order to accurately reflect the multidimensionality of dance. These factors make it difficult to have a singular authoritative source for researcher to depend upon, challenging the traditional understanding of archives and primary resources as many mediums must converge and be woven together to create a coherent whole.

⁵ FIAF Technical Commission, “FIAF Technical Commission Preservation Best Practice,” FIAF, 2009, https://www.fiafnet.org/images/tinyUpload/E-Resources/Commission-And-PIP-Resources/TC_resources/Preservation%20Best%20Practice%20v4%201%201.pdf

⁶ Anthony Cociolo, *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists* (Society of American Archivists Publications, 2017).

While ballet has been around for centuries, the art form is currently undergoing a choreographic renaissance of sorts due to the emergence of several notable choreographers tasked with re-imagining classic ballets such as *The Nutcracker*,⁷ *Romeo and Juliet*,⁸ and *Giselle*.⁹ Such an abundance of choreographic talent was exemplified by the San Francisco Ballet's 2018 season, which included *Unbound: A Festival of New Works*; the company commissioned twelve new ballets from twelve noteworthy choreographers from around the world.¹⁰ Such a celebration of choreographic talent is not new to the ballet world – San Francisco Ballet had a similar feature to its 75th anniversary season, which included ten world premiere ballets,¹¹ and New York City Ballet has commissioned over 430 original pieces since its foundation in 1948 – but it's notable nonetheless. Such prolific creativity and talent may be the result of intensive workshops such as the New York Choreographic Institute, whose highly selective program pairs emerging choreographic talent with composers from the Juilliard School to create new works.¹² With this overflow of talent comes the question of whether the next great choreographers are working amongst today's dancers, and their legacy is at the mercy of dancer memory and archival documentation.

⁷ Two major American Ballet companies, The San Francisco Ballet and Joffrey Ballet in Chicago, have re-choreographed their *Nutcracker* renditions in the past 15 years to reflect the local cultural and city history. Anna Kisselgoff, "Clara and Her 'Nutcracker' Friends Stop by the World's Fair," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), Dec. 21, 2004. Chris Jones, "Joffrey's Chicago-set 'Nutcracker' has become truly alive," *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Dec. 3, 2017.

⁸ Anna Kisselgoff, "Joffrey brings back a stronger, starker 'Romeo & Juliet'," *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, IL), Oct. 14, 2016.

⁹ Jennifer Homans, "Akram Khan Remakes 'Giselle'," *The New Yorker* (New York, NY), Apr. 15, 2019.

¹⁰ Alastair Macaulay, "San Francisco Ballet's Unbound Festival Plunges Into the New," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), Apr. 22, 2018.

¹¹ Alastair Macaulay, "What Audiences Haven't Seen Before," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), Apr. 24, 2008.

¹² New York City Ballet, "New York Choreographic Institute," New York Choreographic Institute, May 20, 2019, <https://www.nycballet.com/About/New-York-Choreographic-Institute.aspx>.

This thesis surveys dance archives across America whose collections extend beyond photography and print ephemera and instead try to capture the multifaceted elements of ballet choreography and culture. The archives in question are situated within the Balanchine Trust, Dance Notation Bureau, Ohio State University, New York Public Library Jerome Robbins Dance Division, and the Museum of Performance + Design. Chosen for their focus on choreographic resources, these are the major institutions serving the needs of dance researchers. Some, such as the New York Public Library and Ohio State University Special Collections, are open to the public and frequented by researchers from around the world, while others, such as the Balanchine Trust and Dance Notation Bureau, focus their efforts on assisting dancers and companies restage historic work with authenticity.

My interest in this area developed as a result of over a decade of ballet study followed by an exploration of choreography during my undergraduate studies. Like many of the people interviewed for this study, I have found it difficult to leave the dance community behind. While I no longer dance regularly, I enjoy attending live ballet performances and watching dance documentaries related to new works and emerging choreographers. Most recently, this has manifested in an interest in choreographers such as Justin Peck and Christopher Wheeldon, who both participated in the aforementioned *Unbound: A Festival of New Works*. While studying archival appraisal and description, I began wondering how current choreographers are documenting their new works and creative process, inspiring this research and thesis.

Using extensive interviews I conducted with archivists, librarians, and dance professionals at various schools and dance institutions, I aim to analyze the methods and standards in place to document choreography for dance professionals and researchers. Analysis

of the research findings identifies commonalities and differences of practice and perspective among dance archives, challenges facing the field, and how technology has contributed and can continue to contribute to the creation of primary sources. While some institutions have opposing perspectives and audiences, any documentation helps illuminate the artistic process and establish dance as an art form worthy of research and preservation akin to other performing arts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The act of archiving often requires physical documentation, but documenting the intangible naturally resists physicality and challenges archivists to think outside the box and break away from tradition. This may be done through cutting-edge technology or through a combination of documentary techniques that, in combination, capture various facets and piece together a representation of the indescribable. Dance is one such intangible challenge for the archives.

Dance archives are established to preserve the artistic legacies of dancers, choreographers, and companies. These archives collect records of the ephemeral event, best defined by Geoffrey Yeo as “persistent representations of activities, created by participants or observers of those activities or by their authorized proxies.”¹³ Created by participants or first-hand observers, these records contain creative and technical information ranging from performance programs and press materials, to costume and set designs, and financial and administrative records documenting the company’s history and touring schedule. Performance and choreographic information can be found within their holdings, but access is often restricted because of the intellectual property belonging to the creative mind behind the dance, and not to the company that commissioned its creation. Because of this, the collecting of records related to the choreographic works themselves has become the work of a select group of dance trusts and libraries that are devoted to collecting information about the pieces. The challenge of this work is in the need to translate an intangible, ephemeral, three-dimensional art into what is often a 2D

¹³ Geoffrey Yeo, “Concepts of Record (1): Evidence, Information, and Persistent Representations,” *American Archivist* vol 70 (Fall/Winter 2007): 342.

interpretation. Furthermore, the practice of dance includes embodied knowledge and often follows oral traditions and kinetic memory that are passed down through years of apprenticeship and mentoring, making it difficult to capture the culture from which the public performance pieces are born.

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to define a few terms at the outset. Generally, dance can be defined as stylized movement, often set to music. Early pictorial evidence of dance can be found in the Bhimbetka rock shelters in India and in Egyptian hieroglyphs, suggesting that dance has been a form of human expression across time and culture. The style of dance discussed in this paper is classical ballet, a highly technical form of dance originating from the Italian Renaissance that spread across Europe and into America. In the last 150 years, modern and contemporary ballet have become increasingly popular, but these styles of dance, while still choreographed, tend to be more interpretive, fluid, and conceptual in nature. Classical ballet is the focus of study for this thesis because of its technical nature and the rigid standards that have developed since its inception. These standards have resulted in a tradition of precise choreographed works set to classical music, which is typically how the public consumes the art.

Choreography comes from the Greek *choros*, meaning “to dance,” or *khoreia*, meaning “dancing in unison,” and French *graphia*, meaning “writing.” It is unclear if this term was originally envisaged as writing in the physical form or within the mind. The choreographer today is considered to be the creative mind behind the movement phrases, or the mastermind connecting various ballet steps, but the title 'choreographer' wasn't commonly used until George

Balanchine suggested it on the playbill for *On Your Toes*.¹⁴ Prior to this, choreographers were often credited using “dances by.”¹⁵

Classical ballet, as with dance performance in general, is difficult to capture, describe, and archive because of its ephemeral nature and embodied elements. Ephemera is often defined as physical materials with fleeting value, but it can also include the intangible. The Society of American Archivists glossary defines ephemera as “Materials, usually printed documents, created for a specific, limited purpose, and generally designed to be discarded after use,”¹⁶ which is different from 'ephemeral value,' which is defined as “Useful or significant for a limited period of time.”¹⁷ Using these definitions, dance in its physical form is ephemeral, and the capture of dance through written notation or video documentation is an act that opposes ephemerality because it is an attempt at permanence. In his book *Non-Standard Collection Management*, librarian Michael Pearce describes ephemera as materials “which the creator does not intend to have any permanent value or significance. Its whole existence is deemed to be ‘one-time.’”¹⁸ Discussing choreographed works can be difficult because the actual movements only exist during the instance of a performance. Dance critic Marcia Siegel defines dance by its ephemerality, believing that “dance exists at a perpetual vanishing point. At the moment of its creation it is

¹⁴ Bernard Taper, *Balanchine: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 180.

¹⁵ Bernard Taper, *Balanchine: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 180.

¹⁶ *Society of American Archivists*, s.v. “ephemera,” accessed February 9, 2019, <https://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/e/ephemera>.

¹⁷ *Society of American Archivists*, s.v. “ephemeral value,” accessed February 9, 2019, <https://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/e/ephemeral-value>.

¹⁸ Michael Pearce, “Ephemera,” in *Non-Standard Collection Management*, ed. Michael Pearce (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992), 180.

gone... [it is] an event that disappears in the very act of materializing.”¹⁹ Artists themselves are challenged by the ephemeral aspects of ballet. For example, San Francisco Ballet archivist Supriya Wronkiewicz has found that, “most companies and individual choreographers care deeply about their legacy.”²⁰ However, a choreographer or company can continue the legacy of the piece through continued restagings — and the work as a *whole* cannot be ephemeral if it is continually revisited. One way to ensure longevity and authenticity of creative works is through the archiving of such performances and reperformances through written (often called “notated”) or video documentation.

The archiving of choreographed dance works is often compared to the archiving of music because they are both ephemeral forms of art. The history of dance and music have been intertwined throughout history because of their symbiotic relationship, so it’s natural for their documentation practices to be similar as well. The desire to preserve music in a written form began in the 11th century but did not follow a uniform system until the beginning of the 18th century.²¹ Today, music is consumed through in-person performance, recorded media, or recreation from a score, but practitioners of music frequently learn from teachers and through study of previous compositions. This is very similar to the modern consumption and practice of ballet, but the development of a written notation system was delayed because of dance’s multi-dimensionality: As Ann Hutchinson observes, “Dance is more complex than music because it

¹⁹ Judy Van Zile, “What is the dance? Implications for Dance Notation,” *Dance Research Journal*, 17/2 & 18/1 (1986-86): 42.

²⁰ Supriya Wronkiewicz, “Dance Companies as Living Archives: Protecting the Future by Preserving the Present” in *New Directions for Special Collections: An Anthology of Practice* ed. Lynne M. Thomas and Beth M Whitaker (Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited, 2017), 109.

²¹ Ann Hutchinson, *Labanotation: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1954), 1.

exists in space as well as in time and because the body itself is capable of so many simultaneous modes of action.”²²

Every dance performance is a unique experience for both dancer and audience, akin to the differences between snowflakes, but by having a strong choreographic tradition, ballets are able to be performed over and over by different casts on different stages. The desire to maintain consistency of the movements from performance to performance, and to pass on this knowledge between people and generations, has led to a desire to document movements in a tangible form. It is important to note, however, that it is the choreographer’s *design* that is at the heart of this form of documentation — not a specific dancer’s or troupe’s execution, as would be witnessed in, for example, a video recording.

If a choreographer chooses to document their vision, information is typically encoded in three ways: through notated movement scores, video recordings, and as embodied knowledge passed down through oral tradition and apprenticeship. Of these options, only video recordings and notation scores are physical documents, but because of ballet’s oral history and apprenticeship tradition, embodied and cultural knowledge is passed down through individual mentors or through choreographer trusts. Restagings of ballets can be created using any of these formats individually, but the three forms also complement each other, provide more detail, and work as fail-safes in the event that some information is lost. Having three forms of information encoding means that dance archives also tend to be multimedia in nature.

²² Ann Hutchinson, *Labanotation: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1954), 1.

Written dance scores are notated following a variety of techniques. Dance notation has existed in some form since the 15th century,²³ but has evolved to become increasingly technical and detailed so that every stylistic movement can be recorded in perpetuity. This increased level of detail has been defined, in large part, as a way for choreographers to establish intellectual property over their works by providing the tangible medium required by the copyright office. While copyright is one reason why notated works are created today, this was not the main reason behind the creation of the notation standards; dance historian Sandra Hammond has found that “the more I investigate earlier dances, the more impressed I am at how *unconcerned* other eras seem to have been that ‘a dance’ remain ‘the same’ from performance to performance.” She continued, “performers were often expected to add or substitute steps that they excelled in, or encouraged to ‘modernize’ a piece with ‘the latest steps of the day.’ I suspect we today are much more concerned with authenticity than others before us.”²⁴ These changes are still in effect today as choreographers often change or substitute steps to fit the style and bodies of dancers. However, this is often only done during the lifetime of the choreographer and upon their death a multitude of minority different iterations exist within the bodies of different dancers. These minute changes create different editions of the piece, but once notated, it is easy for a single version to be seen as the authoritative iteration.

First presented as “kinetography” by Hungarian Rudolf Laban at the second German Dancers’ Congress in 1928, labanotation is one of the most detailed and widely used notation

²³ Ann Hutchinson, *Labanotation: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1954), 1.

²⁴ Judy Van Zile, “What is the dance? Implications for Dance Notation,” *Dance Research Journal*, 17/2 & 18/1 (1986-86): 45.

techniques.²⁵ While preparing to write his own notation standards, Laban studied Raoul Auger Feuillet's Beauchamp-Feuillet notation for ballroom and theatrical dances from 1700 because it differentiated the movements of the right and left sides of the body and mapped steps alongside the music.²⁶ The Beauchamp-Feuillet notation, however, could not be used for any movement besides those of court dances,²⁷ inspiring Laban to make his notation more universally applicable to all types of dance. As a modern dance choreographer, Laban wanted the notation to be applicable to the full range of possible body movements. The resulting system included two innovations in notation: "the vertical staff to represent the body, which allows continuity as well as the correct representation of the right and left sides of the body, and elongated movement symbols, which, by their length, indicate the exact duration of any action. His analysis of movement, which is based on spatial, anatomical, and dynamic principles, is flexible and can be applied to all forms of movement."²⁸ By visually quantifying movements and their lengths in standardized ways, Laban was able to translate 3D movements to a 2D form for the purposes of recreation and artistic preservation.

Many attempts at dance notation had been made prior to Laban's system, but each one "ultimately failed because the continual expansion of the vocabulary made each system, in turn, outmoded. The three fundamental problems – recording complicated movement accurately,

²⁵ János Fügedi, *Basic of Laban Kinetography for Traditional Dancers* (Budapest: Institute for Musicology, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2016), 9.

²⁶ János Fügedi, *Basic of Laban Kinetography for Traditional Dancers* (Budapest: Institute for Musicology, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2016), 9.

²⁷ Roderyk Lange, "Laban and Movement Notation," in *Laban Sourcebook*, ed. Dick McCaw, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 157.

²⁸ Ann Hutchinson, *Labanotation: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1954), 3.

recording it in economical and legible form, and keeping up with continual innovations in movement – left dance notation in a state of flux, incapable of steady growth for centuries.”²⁹ The physical and oral dance vocabulary has expanded since kinetography’s inception, but the notation system was created with this expectation in mind. As a choreographer working during the early years of the German modern dance movement, Laban understood that sections of the body needed to be notated in isolation and in great detail on various planes in order to represent classical, new modern ballet dance movements, and any new dance styles that arose in the future. The separation of body areas and the precision capable within labanotation has allowed for the language to evolve with dance and other forms of movement; labanotation has been used to score yoga, pilates, and sports steps, as well as the movements of non-human animals such as spiders.³⁰

In addition to helping preserve dance choreography in perpetuity, Laban saw notation as a requirement to establish dance as an art akin to poetry and music. In his book *Die Welt des Tänzers (The World of the Dancer)* Laban wrote, “It is important to put down the symbols of dance in writing, for it is only the comparison and examination, the repetition and imitation from which a tradition might unfold that will allow for a deeper comprehension of the artistic achievement of the dance. Where would the art of poetry and music be, if their works had only been passed down by word of mouth?”³¹ In prioritizing a notation system as a means of study and comparison, Laban is conforming to the culture of print: “Print culture of itself has a

²⁹ Ann Hutchinson, *Labanotation: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1954), 1-2.

³⁰ Mei-Chen Lu, interview with Sonja Carlson, January 24, 2019.

³¹ Rudolf Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers* (Stuttgart: Walter Steifert, 1920), 61.

different mindset. It tends to feel a work as ‘closed’, set off from other works, a unit in itself. Print culture gave birth to the romantic notions of ‘originality’ and ‘creativity’, which set apart an individual work from other works even more, seeing its origins and meaning as independent of outside influence.”³² This works in conjunction with the archival notion on authenticity, which is “the quality of archival documents to bear reliable testimony to the actions, procedures and processes which brought them into being.”³³ Solidifying a dance work in written form separates the steps from their greater artistic context and allows for them to be attributed to a single person without acknowledging the ballet culture that the steps grew from. A verbally transmitted dance can be authoritative but is usually transmitted by a person that is versed in dance traditions and can provide more information on the background and intentionality of the movements.

Like music, dance customs and steps existed only by word of mouth and have been adapted into a written form to fit the legacy requirements of the modern Western world; if ballet were a culture unto its own, it would embrace oral traditions and customs. Historian and philosopher Walter Ong studied oral and written literacy cultures and found a close relationship between vocalization and body movement: “the oral word... never exists in a simple verbal context, as a written word does. Spoken words are always modifications of a total, existential situation, which always engages the body. Bodily activity beyond mere vocalization is not adventurous or contrived in oral communication, but is natural and even inevitable.”³⁴ Many people involuntarily move their bodies while speaking, but dancers use their bodies to

³² Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (New York: Methuen & Co., 1982), 133.

³³ Terry Eastwood, “Nailing a Little Jelly to the Wall of Archival Studies,” *Archivaria* 35 (Spring 1993): 243.

³⁴ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (New York: Methuen & Co., 1982), 67-68.

communicate stories, so it is only natural to learn these practices by oral means. Any adaptation to a written or recorded form is a deviation from ballet's early history.

The documentation of dance through written notation has its benefits and its disadvantages. First, the act of notating a dance work often involves hiring a notation professional to interpret and record movements. Second, choreographers and dancers typically do not take the time to learn labanotation techniques to score their own pieces, forcing a third party to come in and observe the rehearsal process while notating. There are strict standards within labanotation and in order to score a piece one has to become a certified notator, but the role of notating an entire dance is still somewhat subjective, allowing for two notated scores of the same piece to be different. A fully notated score can include great amounts of detail, but the notation has a steep learning curve. Thirdly, because labanotation is not widely understood, an interpreter of labanotation is required unless the original choreographer or a dancer with embodied knowledge of the dance is available. This dependency on those versed in labanotation creates a barrier of access for dancers and choreographers alike and the decoding of the scores requires labanotation writing and reading to be taught by a third party.

Furthermore, the onus to notate a piece is often on the choreographer. When a new ballet is created, it is frequently commissioned by a company from a particular choreographer. The commissioning company may own the costumes, sets, and other material components of the performance, but the choreography is the intellectual property of the choreographer. It is in the choreographer's best interest to notate their creations as a way to copyright and manage their body of work, but this can be prohibitively expensive for many young artists.

To reduce the cost of documentation, choreographers often opt to digitally capture their creations. Companies and choreographers will use rehearsal or performance tapes during restagings because each dancer can find their equivalent and observe the steps, but sometimes the details can be lost in the wide angle view or in the low video quality of early standard definition recordings. Entire performers can also be lost if the camera focuses on a single part of the stage, leaving the choreography for anyone off camera unknown. Some choreographers capture their unstructured experimental studio time on video so that they can replay elements that they want to integrate into the final piece. These are useful to the choreographer and provide researchers with insight into the creative process and choreographic stylings, but are not authoritative and sometimes look nothing like the final piece. Final performance videos may also exist within a dance company archive, but serve as evidence of the company history and not as a source for future restagings or profit. These videos are rarely available to the public.

Video assets often vary in format, especially for older collections and choreographers with careers spanning many decades. Once established, choreographers tend to be high in demand, traveling around the world and constantly working on their next commissioned piece, leaving them little time to manage their video collections and stay up to date on archival standards. As a result, digital files are in danger of corruption or degradation. The establishment of an artist's estate, dance trust, or collaboration with a dance archive coalition is often not done until years (or even decades) into an artist's career. Contemporary choreographers have the benefit of video recording technologies being relatively inexpensive and readily available, but previous generations of choreographers were not so lucky. As a result, video footage of rehearsals or final productions may be difficult to find or are already degrading. In cases where

video assets do not exist, archives and companies have to rely on notated scores and embodied knowledge in order to restage a work. Even the most famous choreographers have lost dozens of their works because archival action was not taken and embodied knowledge deteriorated over time.

The intangible cultural knowledge and embodied elements of dance are at the crux of what make archival documentation of ballet challenging. A single choreographed work is not representative of the years of study, practice, and apprenticeship that inform the physical execution of ballet performance that is observed by audiences. The knowledge of the dance, its movements and its meanings, are held within the bodies and minds of the dancers, and while the movements can be captured by a notated score or video, the reasoning, feeling and intention of each movement cannot. Dance theorists Adine Armelagos and Mary Sirridge describe dance as “perhaps the last of the art forms to rely heavily on kinesthetic and visual memory for repeated performances.”³⁵ When learning a ballet, whether new or restaged, dancers combine their years of technical training with the choreographed movements, unique style of the choreographer, and any required emotive qualities; some pieces have a strong narrative structure and the choreographer will share specific intentions and emotions to project on stage while conducting movements across the stage. These details can be recorded by an experienced notator if the resources are provided, but can also be passed on from choreographer to dancer, dancer to dancer, or stager to dancer. “To know what dancing feels like, one must ask dancers what they

³⁵ Adina Armelagos and Mary Sirridge, “The Identity Crisis in Dance,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37, no. 2 (Winter 1978): 129.

experience or experience dance oneself.”³⁶ Because of this, “the archive of the dance... is within the performers’ bodies, within their lived experience.”³⁷

Professor and chair of the Department of Performance Studies at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts André Lepecki understands that within the dance professions, the body functions as an archival repository, collecting information through years of practice, mentorship, and performance. In the article “Body as Archive,” Lepecki connects the desire to archive dance works to a desire to recreate performances, arguing that, “every will to archive in dance must lead to a will to re-enact dances. Such an indissociable link means that each "will" acts upon the other to re-define what is understood by "archiving" and what is understood by "re-enacting." This redefining action is carried out through a common articulator: The dancer's body... in dance re-enactments there will be no distinctions left between archive and body. The body is archive and archive a body.”³⁸ In this article Lepecki specifically discusses three conceptual contemporary dance pieces, but the idea of the body acting as an archive and the goal of archiving dance being for re-enactment is true for classical ballet as well.

Within the ballet community, the desire to archive, whether through notation or video, is born from a desire to recreate. There is nothing like witnessing a live dance performance, and no two performances are the same. These differences between performances and also between stagings are part of the appeal of witnessing the performing arts because the audience knows that the emotions and athleticism they witness on stage are ephemeral; it’s like being in on a secret

³⁶ Edward C. Warburton, “Of Meanings and Movements: Re-Languaging Embodiment in Dance Phenomenology and Cognition,” *Dance Research Journal* 43, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 159.

³⁷ Arike Oke, “Keeping time in dance archives: moving towards the phenomenological archive space,” *Archives and Records* 48, no. 2 (Autumn 2018): 201.

³⁸ André Lepecki, “Body as Archive,” *Dance Research Journal* 42, no. 2 (Winter 2010): 31.

with a room full of other patrons. The motivation to restage comes from the desire to join that community of patrons by witnessing a similar experience. When a professional dance company restages a piece rather than commissions a new one, they bring in experts who are able to impart their knowledge about the steps, emotions, and intentions on the dancers through demonstrations and storytelling.

There is a strong oral history and apprenticeship tradition within the ballet community as performance knowledge and stylistic tips are passed from generation to generation. Muscle memory of the physical movements is formed through daily repeated execution, but there are different ways of executing the same movement that fit the style of both the choreographer and the music. The culture of classical ballet schools and companies have strict structures that have developed over time: “History, tradition, and hierarchy pervade classical ballet technique, language, tradition and each ballet school and company’s organization. The movement of ballet is a fonds in itself.”³⁹ The choreographed works of one artist are one fonds, but they often rely heavily on an understanding of the greater ballet movement fonds. Dancers spend their whole careers learning ballet movements and code-switching between the various styles of choreographers or companies, and upon their retirement, this wealth of knowledge makes them a valuable asset. Due to the physically demanding nature of ballet, many dancers have short-lived professional careers following 10-15 years of study; dancers who are lucky enough to not acquire a career-ending injury typically retire from performance by their mid-40s. Having amassed decades of tribal knowledge, many retired ballet dancers remain within the dance community in positions such as teachers, directors, choreographers, or staggers where they can impart their

³⁹ Angela Pickard, *Ballet Body Narratives: Pain, Pleasure and Perfection in Embodied Identity* (Bern: International Academic Publishers, 2015), 23.

knowledge on the next generation. This keeps information within the dance family and passes it on through oral traditions, resisting written documentation and traditional archival form.

Through analysis of several iterations of ballet archive, this study will demonstrate how varied the field is and how a single approach cannot be applied to the documentation of all choreographed works. I demonstrate that there is a separation between the archival requirements of an active ballet company, which functionally must be a living archive, and the systems of legacy institutions, which function as trusts with archival tendencies. Other organizations function independently from a single dance institution, providing services and resources to educate and assist in archival efforts, but grapple with similar issues of locating resources and staying up-to-date with modern standards.

THE BALANCHINE TRUST

In the world of American classical ballet, there have only been a few choreographers in the last hundred years renowned enough to warrant the establishment of trusts to preserve their legacies: Jerome Robbins, Twyla Tharp, and George Balanchine. Unsurprisingly, these are also often the most well known figures associated with ballet, and their works continue to be staged today through their trusts and multi-media documentation methods (Other well-known names such as Merce Cunningham and Martha Graham also have established dance trusts, but are considered to be modern ballet choreographers). The prolific and distinguished choreographer George Balanchine saw the value of notating and capturing his ballets so that artistic control could be maintained. His ballets have a distinct style of movement and musicality, so maintaining control over the dances and managing their authenticity was of great importance; notating his works was a way of protecting his legacy and his distinguished, refined dance style — and ensuring that his works could be recreated (and monetized) long beyond his lifetime.

Prior to his death, Balanchine created a will to bequeath his ballets to select heirs in America so that his creations would not be given to his brother and claimed by the Communist Soviet government.⁴⁰ The 1976 Copyright Act broadened the law to allow for choreographic works to be privately owned. The 1976 Copyright Act does not specifically define “choreography,” but does state that the work must be original and a representation of the work must be “fixed” in a tangible medium.⁴¹ Two years later in Compendium II of Copyright Office

⁴⁰ Caroline Joan S. Picart, *Critical Race Theory and Copyright in American Dance: Whiteness as Status Property* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 73.

⁴¹ *Copyright Act 1976* ch. 1, s. 101, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/copyright/copyright.act.chapt1a.html#17usc101>

Practices, choreography was defined as “the composition and arrangement of dance movements and patterns, and is usually intended to be accompanied by music. Dance is static and kinetic successions of bodily movement in certain rhythmic and spatial relationships. Choreographic works need not tell a story in order to be protected by copyright.”⁴² This definition of choreography highlights the kinetic body movements, creating a tension for the “fixed medium” required by the 1976 Copyright Act.

Making an ephemeral, temporal, and embodied artistic work tangible with enough precision to denote stylistic copyright required a refined notation, which is exactly what labanotation offered and continues to offer its adopters. Balanchine himself took the time to learn how to write and read labanotation scores, which is not something typically done by choreographers. In a preface to *Labanotation: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement*, Balanchine wrote, “as a choreographer, I became more sharply aware of the need for an accurate and workable method for notating my works. To me, the prime requisite of such a notation system would be its ability to correlate faithfully the time values in the dance with the music.”⁴³ Labanotation was that system for Balanchine, who believed, “it would soon be universally recognized as being as necessary to the dancer as musical notation is to the musician.”⁴⁴ Written in 1954, the spread of labanotation training among working ballet dancers has not achieved Balanchine’s expectations, creating a barrier between dancers and these authoritative documents.

⁴² *Compendium II 1984*, <https://copyright.gov/history/comp/compendium-two.pdf>

⁴³ Ann Hutchinson, *Labanotation: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1954), xi.

⁴⁴ Ann Hutchinson, *Labanotation: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1954), xii.

Despite his knowledge of labanotation and interest in notation, approximately only 75 of his 425 ballets are still available for restaging using notation scores, video tapes, or embodied knowledge. The rest of his ballets “either no longer resided in the muscle memories of his dancers, or had disappeared with the passing of its dancers.”⁴⁵ The will bequeathed specific ballets to 14 different legatees, who were able to “control not only performances of the ballets, but also their “look” or representation.”⁴⁶ This wide distribution of assets complicated the ability to easily stage the ballets, “especially given that Balanchine left nothing to the New York City Ballet or the School of American Ballet,”⁴⁷ the company and associated school that Balanchine had established during his career. To establish some order among the legacy dances, the Balanchine Trust was formed by two legatees, with many others joining soon after: “With fourteen legatees, the prospect of administrative chaos loomed, whereas a centralized entity could facilitate the licensing of the ballets, foster their dissemination throughout the world, and make sure that performances would be authentic and of satisfactory quality.”⁴⁸

Established in 1987, four years after Balanchine’s passing, The Balanchine Trust “is the center from which the business operations relating to the licensing of George Balanchine’s creative output emanate. At its core, the Trust has the responsibility of disseminating and protecting the integrity and the copyrights of George Balanchine’s work in the present and for the

⁴⁵ Caroline Joan S. Picart, *Critical Race Theory and Copyright in American Dance: Whiteness as Status Property* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 74.

⁴⁶ Caroline Joan S. Picart, *Critical Race Theory and Copyright in American Dance: Whiteness as Status Property* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 73.

⁴⁷ Caroline Joan S. Picart, *Critical Race Theory and Copyright in American Dance: Whiteness as Status Property* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 74-75.

⁴⁸ Bernard Taper, *Balanchine: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 404.

future.”⁴⁹ For over thirty years, the Trust continues to be the source for all staged and licensed Balanchine ballets, and manages the rights to all notated scores of his ballets. To preserve the authenticity and quality of ballets, the Trust requires all licensed ballets to be staged by an approved repetiteur.⁵⁰ A repetiteur is a person who uses their detailed knowledge of the steps, movements, placements, and intentions to help a company restage a work, rather than giving choreographic input. These repetiteurs cast the ballet and work with the dancers in the studio and during dress rehearsals to ensure every movement is executed as close to Balanchine’s intention as possible. Despite Balanchine’s keen interest in labanotation, the Balanchine Trust’s repetiteurs are not required to work from a specific medium; the Trust offers staggers video resources and has access to scores for reference, but the repetiteurs themselves are often not able to read or write labanotation.⁵¹

Darla Hoover is a Trust-approved repetiteur and former New York City Ballet company member. Hoover was chosen by Balanchine to join New York City Ballet and was a featured soloist in several of his ballets throughout her tenure from 1980-1991.⁵² Over her 11 year career as a professional dancer, Hoover learned several Balanchine ballets from Rosemary Dunleavy, a ballerina who danced in several Balanchine premieres and served as his personal ballet mistress beginning in 1971. Upon his death in 1983, Dunleavy became the New York City Ballet’s ballet

⁴⁹ George Balanchine Trust, “About: The Trust,” The George Balanchine Trust, 2011, <http://balanchine.com/the-trust/>.

⁵⁰ George Balanchine Trust, “Licensing the Ballets,” The George Balanchine Trust, 2011, <http://balanchine.com/licensing-the-ballets/>.

⁵¹ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 3, 2019.

⁵² Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet, “Faculty: Darla Hoover,” Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet, <https://cpyb.org/school/academic-program/artistic-leadership/darla-hoover>.

mistress and has been staging Balanchine's works on the company ever since. "She is brilliant," Hoover stated. "She was responsible for teaching us every single Balanchine ballet. This woman is like a walking encyclopedia. She knows those ballets inside and out. She's astounding. Her teaching was really wonderful because she was very, very clear."⁵³

Upon her retirement, Hoover transitioned to becoming a teacher at two ballet schools and eventually a repetiteur for the Balanchine Trust. Because of her years of teaching, a company requested Hoover to stage Balanchine's *Tarantella* despite her not being a Trust-approved repetiteur. Patricia McBride, a longtime dancer for New York City Ballet and Balanchine prodigy thought Hoover would be a great repetiteur,⁵⁴ and so she was brought on board the team.

Since then, Hoover has staged at least thirteen of Balanchine's 75 remaining ballets on various companies around the world. Despite all the notated scores and Balanchine's high praise of labanotation, Hoover uses her embodied knowledge and some performance videos as the basis for her own stagings. "When you learn something correctly from the start, it makes it so much easier. Balanchine's choreography always falls on your body like a well tailored suit – like something that was custom fit. So between that and Rosemary's clear and concise teaching, it made holding a vast repertoire in your brain and in your body not difficult at all."⁵⁵ Hoover has a personal repertoire of ballets that she stages for the Balanchine Trust, and ballets that she doesn't know are known and staged by other Trust-approved repetiteurs. These other repetiteurs are

⁵³ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 3, 2019.

⁵⁴ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 3, 2019.

⁵⁵ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 3, 2019.

mostly other former New York City Ballet dancers,⁵⁶ meaning that they likely performed many Balanchine works during their dancing careers and therefore understand his style and musicality. Hoover reflected, “I believe that at the NYCB, you have to dance more ballets per season than any other company, so you have very limited rehearsal time. I remember times where, especially if there was an injury, you’d have only two rehearsals before being on stage. That never scared me, but having someone like Rosemary teach me a ballet made me feel super confident.”⁵⁷

Hoover identified three key elements that contribute to her embodied mastering of Balanchine’s ballet. Each element speaks to the oral and embodied culture of ballet, building on each other to form a complete, cohesive, and informed whole ballet:

“First of all, it goes backwards in that Rosemary Dunleavy taught me these ballets. Her original teaching was so clear and concise, there was never a question in my mind of what I was doing or the musicality or where I was supposed to be on stage.

“Secondly, I was a fast learner in the company, so once I had my role down I’d learn the roles of principles or look at the guys’ entrances. I was fascinated by how it came together. My experience dancing these ballets was not with blinders on, I was really seeing what all was going on.

“Thirdly, I was very fortunate to have been there when Balanchine was still alive, so it was still very fresh information of how these ballets were supposed to be danced and what was the musicality. That’s in the body. Whatever you learn first sticks in your body so I feel like I learned a really valid version.”⁵⁸

To verify her embodied knowledge, Hoover consults videotaped performances provided by the Balanchine Trust. “Especially when I was staging something for the first time from scratch, I would go back and review the tapes to make sure I had it in my head accurately. I always use the videos from the last time Balanchine was present, like the 1983 version or

⁵⁶ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 3, 2019.

⁵⁷ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 28, 2019.

⁵⁸ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 3, 2019.

something close to that. For me it feels more true because that was the version I danced.”⁵⁹ These recorded performances would be provided by the Trust in the form of VHS tapes, though the recordings rarely came with the equipment needed to view it, putting the onus on the repetiteur to be prepared.⁶⁰

Hoover mentioned that this system has since changed and performance videos are now available online using personalized Vimeo accounts for the repetiteurs. This system requires internet access for repetiteurs who rely on the videos when staging or studying. Hoover no longer reviews tapes, “these ballets are so in my head that I need very little videotape work anymore,”⁶¹ but newer repetiteurs or people staging a piece they’re not as familiar with may require a lot of time reviewing performance tapes.

This Vimeo system shows that the Trust has digitized the video assets, or at least ones that may be used for staging study. The personalized logins make it easier to manage access, and Vimeo has more advanced privacy options than other online web players such as YouTube. Being dependent upon internet access is limiting, but the companies licensing Balanchine ballets tend to be located within American cities. Some repetiteurs, including Hoover, have traveled internationally to stage Balanchine works, but in these cases the repetiteurs have to prepare ahead of time to depend on their embodied knowledge and any written notations.

Videos may be an easy and detailed method for capturing and replaying choreography, but Balanchine did not find them to be precise enough for restaging his highly stylized creations.

⁵⁹ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 3, 2019.

⁶⁰ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 3, 2019.

⁶¹ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 3, 2019.

Balanchine wrote, “While some people advocate the use of films to record ballet, I have found them useful only in indicating the style of the finished product and in suggesting the general over-all visual picture and staging. A film cannot reproduce a dance step by step, since the lens shoots from but one angle and there is a general confusion of blurred impressions which even constant re-showing can never eliminate.”⁶² He preferred labanotation because of its precision and clarity, but the barrier of knowledge and training required to read the scores makes them inaccessible to the average Balanchine dancer or repetiteur.

Instead, Hoover writes notes of her own using performance tapes and her memory, creating a notation that works with her process. These colorful notes focus on stage position, cannons, and musicality, filling in details that are crucial to Balanchine’s distinctive style.

“I don’t have any formal training of ballet notation, it’s notes that make sense to me. I do one chapter of formations and how people flock into place, and then the next is the steps with counts, and then I’ll add sidebars of things I remember being really important during that step or the musicality, but everything is my own versions and they’re handwritten... I’ve since then scanned my notes and have copies on my computers. It used to be terrifying, though, because I’d go off to do a staging and I’d guard my notes with my life. I thought, if I lose these notes I’m doomed and I would have to write them all again and that’s hours upon hours of work.”⁶³

Coincidentally, these stages of recalling, reviewing, and recreating touch on each of the archival mediums for capturing dance: embodied knowledge, video, and written notes. Embodied knowledge, learned from mentors or directly from a choreographer, serves as the foundation for her work, with videos of performances filling in any gaps in her memory. Finally, the choreographed piece is compiled on paper using a personalized notation system. Hoover believes

⁶² Ann Hutchinson, *Labanotation: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1954), xi-xii.

⁶³ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 3, 2019.

this individualized note-taking system to be common: “We each have our own system. I don’t think any of my peers that work for the Trust, that I know of, studied a certain format. We’ve all created our own formats. I’ve never used a notated score from the Trust.”⁶⁴

Hoover commented that her notes, written in her personalized style, are hers to keep and pass on upon her retirement. The leader of New York City Ballet is ballet master and former principal dancer Jonathan Stafford, who was one of Hoover’s students at Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet. Prior to his current leadership position, Hoover already knew that Stafford would inherit her notes. “I wouldn’t put them out there for publication. The Trust wouldn’t be happy with me for that, but the notes should go somewhere and aren’t I fortunate that a former student of mine is leading New York City Ballet now? I can’t imagine them having any trouble with me handing my notes over to him.”⁶⁵ Because the notes do not follow a standardized notation style, however, they may not be understood by everyone. This is not to say that someone mentored by Hoover would not be able to decipher them, but the thought had also not crossed Hoover’s mind. “I think he would [decipher them]. Someone like Stafford knows my lingo. He knows me so well, but you’re raising a question in my head. Next time I see him, I’m going to show him some of my notes and see if they makes sense to him. Now I’m curious. I always thought, ‘Oh yeah, this will make sense,’ but maybe it won’t. I’ll find out.”⁶⁶

Notes such as Hoover’s demonstrate the desire to have written resources, and also that labanotation is not the most accessible and useful to the dancers and répétiteurs who actively

⁶⁴ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 3, 2019.

⁶⁵ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 3, 2019.

⁶⁶ Darla Hoover, Interview with Sonja Carlson, February 3, 2019.

work to restage choreography. Hoover's expectation for Stafford to automatically understand her system stems from her mentorship role and an understanding that they share much of the same knowledge and background, but this possibly limits the use of her notes for future generations and those without a similar dance background or knowledge base. Because of the Trust, the works will continue to be taught and embodied by generations of dancers, but Hoover's notes may be indecipherable in a few decades

From an archival point of view, Hoover has a system that uses video resources to build upon her strong foundation of embodied knowledge and creates written notes to aid what is held in her body and mind. These notes do not follow a standardized system, but have historical and research value because they identify areas that are crucial to recall, areas that may not be a part of Hoover's embodied knowledge, and they may be able to be understood by others who are familiar with the choreographed works. These documents act as an authoritative reference for Hoover but represent a work owned not by the repeteur but by the Balanchine Trust; the notes are Hoover's to pass along and use, but the performance they help create belongs to the Trust. Digital versions of these notes could be archived with copyright and use restrictions, but the notes are a way to start understanding the mind of a Balanchine dancer. Because of her career as a dancer at New York City Ballet, Hoover has a very intimate relationship with these ballets and Balanchine himself, and her notes may add details and intentions that are not recorded in a score using labanotation. It's likely that these details were learned through stories and working with people such as Rosemary Dunleavy who have encyclopedic knowledge of Balanchine's ballets and share this knowledge through teaching of the movements and style rather than through writing or formalized notation.

From Hoover's experience as a répétiteur, it's evident that the Balanchine Trust prioritizes authenticity of the choreographed works and maintains this authenticity by working with people who have a deep understanding and appreciation for Balanchine's creations. While the Trust provides répétiteurs with video resources to aid their understanding, the archival knowledge is very much embodied and passed generationally from dancer to dancer through rehearsals and restagings. This institutional practice says something about classical ballet culture: some levels of ballet knowledge stay within the family and such lessons must be earned. The documents created by Hoover for her process speak both to the choreography and to the Balanchine ballet culture as her embodied knowledge is spread through her work as a répétiteur, teacher, and mentor for the next generation of ballet leaders.

THE DANCE NOTATION BUREAU AND OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Established in 1940, the Dance Notation Bureau (DNB) is the only organization in the United States dedicated to the promotion, preservation, documentation, and study of human movements using labanotation.⁶⁷ The organization's mission is to advance the field of dance through labanotation, which "give permanency to a work by allowing the dance to be performed or studied long after the lifetime of the artist who created that work."⁶⁸ The DNB was established by four people, including Ann Hutchinson Guest, an author and dance researcher whose work has advanced the symbols and systems established by Rudolf Laban nearly a century ago so that it continues to evolve to fit the needs of dancers, choreographers, and researchers.⁶⁹

In its mission to advance the field of dance through the study of labanotation, the DNB has seven guiding principles:

- (1) to act as a clearinghouse, research, and work center;
- (2) to standardize the labanotation;
- (3) to teach dance notation;
- (4) to issue diplomas to those qualified to teach and to notate;
- (5) to record dances and ballets;
- (6) to form a library of dance works;
- (7) to perpetuate dance through the use of notation.⁷⁰

This commitment to dance recording, research, and development has resulted in the creation of over a thousand notated scores since 1940. This large collection, and the DNB's reliance on

⁶⁷ Mei-Chen Lu, "The Dance Notation Bureau," *Dance Chronicle* vol. 32, no 2 (2009): 291.

⁶⁸ Mei-Chen Lu, "The Dance Notation Bureau," *Dance Chronicle* vol. 32, no 2 (2009): 291.

⁶⁹ Language of Dance Centre, "Fact Sheet: Dr. Ann Hutchinson Guest," Language of Dance Centre, 2010 <https://www.lodc.org/uploads/pdfs/AHG.pdf>.

⁷⁰ Mei-Chen Lu, "The Dance Notation Bureau," *Dance Chronicle* vol. 32, no 2 (2009): 292.

unpredictable grant and donation funding, led to the establishment of the DNB Extension for Education and Research within the Ohio State University (OSU) Department of Dance in 1968.⁷¹ The original notated scores were sent to OSU for archival preservation and safe keeping, and in return the OSU library and special collections made two copies of each score – one from the DNB and another for the NYPL Jerome Robbins Dance Division.⁷² Despite OSU having the original scores, the DNB manages the circulation of their use for research and restaging; before sending out a score, OSU and NYPL contact the DNB for certification and approval.

Beginning in the 1970s, the DNB expanded its collection scope because the Bureau's executive Herbert Kummel believed that a score of only the movements was an incomplete representation of the choreographed work.⁷³ Because of this, the collection now includes production information on lighting, sets, music, props, movement style, and casting as well as CDs, videotapes, and DVDs.⁷⁴ This multimedia collection continues to circulate (often with copyright and pre-approval restrictions) for research and reference at OSU, the DNB, and the NYPL.

While video is useful when restaging a work and the DNB has some reference videos in their collection, the video does not replace the function of a score or vice versa. Scores are created in the rehearsal studio with the dancers so that the intentions and detail for each dancer's movements can be included. This means that a notation project must be coordinated between a

⁷¹ Mei-Chen Lu, "The Dance Notation Bureau," *Dance Chronicle* vol. 32, no 2 (2009): 296.

⁷² Mei-Chen Lu, "The Dance Notation Bureau," *Dance Chronicle* vol. 32, no 2 (2009): 296.

⁷³ Mei-Chen Lu, "The Dance Notation Bureau," *Dance Chronicle* vol. 32, no 2 (2009): 296.

⁷⁴ Mei-Chen Lu, "The Dance Notation Bureau," *Dance Chronicle* vol. 32, no 2 (2009): 296-297, 300.

dance company, the notator, and the funding organization or trust. Because of the cost and this coordination, it is often repertory pieces from established choreographers and companies that are funded and notated.

Not every choreographer embraces notation capture. The embodied and evolving tradition of dance is often something embraced by choreographers who resist the permanence of a written work. Labanotation teacher and Fellow of the International Council for Kinetography Laban Judy Van Zile remarked, “A dance creator must decide whether or not a particular dance should be notated. The choreographer needs to consider if the work should live beyond his or her lifetime, and whether it may serve as a framework upon which other individuals with artistic sensibilities may build a performance that is true to both the choreographer and the performers, as well as the audience and the time in which the performance is to occur.”⁷⁵ Notation is not for every choreographer, but in pursuit of recording dances and ballets, the DNB attempts to work with choreographers of all dance types. DNB Director of Library Services Mei-Chen Lu addressed this issue, stating:

“We try to convince them, but if they keep rejecting us, it’s not our position to force it upon them. It’s a matter of whether they want it or not. Especially if we are making an offer to notate the work for free, [the choreographer] may have a lot of other concerns about people stealing their work and using the notation score. We can put a restriction on the score so that it can only be viewed on the premises or we contact the choreographer so they know who’s using it. There’s different approaches to try to convince the choreographers, but really it’s the choreographer’s own will that determines if we notate or not. If they won’t allow it, then we move on... We are hoping that people will eventually see the value of notation and that we are not there to steal from the choreographer, but instead helping them to preserve their works.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Judy Van Zile, “What is the dance? Implications for Dance Notation,” *Dance Research Journal* vol. 17/18, vol. 17, no. 2 - vol. 18, no. 1 (Autumn, 1985 - Spring, 1986): 43.

⁷⁶ Mei-Chen Lu, interview with Sonja Carlson, January 24, 2019.

Choreographers who consciously choose not to capture their work through notation must be aware that their creations are in danger of disappearance. This runs contrary to the mission of the DNB, but the decision is honored as part of the artistic vision. While the piece may be restaged from dancer memory, without constant reperformance, it is at risk of being forgotten and lost.

For those choreographers who choose to have their works notated, the scores are tracked and pre-approved for release (for education or restaging use) because of copyright restrictions. The DNB does not own or possess the copyright for any of the notated works in their collection: “A notated work is protected through copyright status, so the use of a score is always contingent upon the wishes of the choreographer or his/her estate. Permission must be sought by the DNB for any patron wishing to use a notated score for study or staging. However, educational use of scores is often granted freely.”⁷⁷ The DNB acts as a liaison for the people and trusts who do possess ownership by facilitating research requests, managing licensing and royalty fees, and assisting with the restaging process. Furthermore, by having many dances stored together, the DNB assists with discoverability and outreach, helping works continue to live through performance.

The key to accessing these scores is the ability to read labanotation. Because of this, DNB Director of Library Services Mei-Chen Lu is able to read labanotation but does not have a library science degree or certification. “Because the library is so specialized in notation,” says Lu, “being able to read and teach notation are beneficial. The previous librarians couldn’t engage with the scores because they couldn’t read them, and didn’t really understand the content; they were more managing from the librarian point of view, entering the information, but they didn’t

⁷⁷ Dance Notation Bureau, “Our Archives of Notated Theatrical Dances,” Dance Notation Bureau, <http://dancenotation.org/library/frame0.html>.

really understand the dance, the choreographer, the history, and the notation too.”⁷⁸ Much like librarians for music, law, or the sciences, there’s a benefit to having in-depth, specialized knowledge, and the DNB prioritizes this knowledge over librarianship.

Because of the requirement to read labanotation in order to access the collection, the DNB is focused on education and outreach, often hosting classes and certification seminars. These classes teach varying levels of notation reading and writing, ensuring that the scores continue to be produced and accessible to dancers. The Bureau also publishes books about labanotation and the benefits of dance notation, making the system more accessible to those interest in learning more.

The title of “Director of Library Services” instead of an archivist title helps portray the collection as being living and active instead of static and old. Beyond that, the archive is activated through the use of score copies within the library, which are created from a master scan of the original score housed at the OSU Special Collections. This activation of the archive is necessary for business, but also ensures that labanotation education and utilization continue. Much like language, if people no longer read and write labanotation, the knowledge needed to decipher its symbols is at risk. Furthermore, the library requires a membership, has circulation fees, and allows for materials to be taken off premises and returned by an assigned due date.

Lu’s understanding of library and archive theory or standards has been developed through work with other institutions. “My training with libraries was through working with different librarians, like at Ohio State University, and also working with the Dance Heritage Coalition. By

⁷⁸ Mei-Chen Lu, interview with Sonja Carlson, January 24, 2019.

being a member of DHC, [the DNB] got to know other members like the Library of Congress, UCLA, and by working with those libraries, I learned how to manage the collection.”⁷⁹

Because the DNB collection contains various types of highly specialized media, standard metadata formats and databases have not fit their needs. Instead, Lu created a catalog and metadata scheme using FileMaker Pro; a few years ago, the DNB received a Mellon Foundation grant to build the public-facing side of the Notated Theatrical Dances Catalog.⁸⁰ This has made the collection more accessible by allowing researchers, dancers, and staggers to search for scores within the DNB collection that fit their specific needs. The search fields include:⁸¹

Choreographer	Dance Title	Year Choreographed
Level of Dancer	Version Staged By	Style
Composer	Duration	Notator
Level of Notation	Status of Score	Minimum Number of Dancers
Fees (with separation for fees and royalty)	Permission Status	

Allowing the general public to search the collection catalog further allows for the DNB to act as a liaison between a choreographer’s estate and active dance groups who wish to stage a historical piece. This brings in some funds for the Bureau because they take a cut of the staging fee that is negotiated with the choreographers or trust.

Like many nonprofit and community archives, the DNB relies heavily on grant and donation funding to operate, notate new works, and educate new teachers and writers of labanotation. Much like individual and community archives, the DNB is largely funded through grants from organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment

⁷⁹ Mei-Chen Lu, interview with Sonja Carlson, January 24, 2019.

⁸⁰ Mei-Chen Lu, interview with Sonja Carlson, January 24, 2019.

⁸¹ Dance Notation Bureau, “DNB Notated Theatrical Dances Catalog,” Dance Notation Bureau, <http://dancenotation.org/catalog/>.

for the Humanities, the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Capezio/Ballet Makers Dance Foundation, as well as various family foundations and over 500 individual donors.⁸² The DNB's services in notating dance were most in demand in the 1970s and 1980s before handheld video recording devices were easily available and affordable, but operations continue today despite digital video's accessibility. The prominence of video has affected their public funding, however, with fewer grants coming through to sponsor the notation of new works. Lu stated, "more than 70% of the scores that we acquire every year, the funding is through grants. We go out and apply for funding and then we approach the choreographer, saying we're interested in notating your work, preserving it in labanotation."⁸³ Often those projects are created with distinguished choreographers or pieces in mind because funders like knowing that the scores will be activated for restaging.

The DNB also has an agreement with the Centre Nationale de la Danse in France, allowing access to the scores of various French and European choreographers. Centre de la Danse, however, is supported by the Ministry of Culture, making the funding system different. Lu explained,

"The DNB is a central organization, so we go out looking for funding and get pieces notated. The French government is very supportive of the arts, but you have to apply for funding individually. Centre de la Danse is an organization that helps dancers to rent out studios and provide services, but they don't go out there and apply for funding or spread the job to the notators. The notators often have to work with their own company or student choreographer and write a proposal to the government to get funding for their project."⁸⁴

⁸² Dance Notation Bureau, "About the DNB," Dance Notation Bureau, <http://www.dancenotation.org/>.

⁸³ Mei-Chen Lu, interview with Sonja Carlson, January 24, 2019.

⁸⁴ Mei-Chen Lu, interview with Sonja Carlson, January 24, 2019.

There may be more public funding and support of the arts in France, but the onus to write grants and organize projects falls on the notators. The Centre has a website devoted to notation projects with a directory of notators and choreographers and training workshops for different notation methods, but funding is not guaranteed and the Centre doesn't coordinate any notation projects.

The DNB's partnership with OSU supports notation education and means that the Bureau's scores and historical documents are preserved alongside the University's large performing arts holdings. OSU typically has a graduate student or professor assigned as a liaison between the University and the DNB, and the special collections staff work with the liaison to coordinate periodic transfers of archival materials from the DNB New York library to the OSU campus archives. Otherwise, the DNB Extension at OSU acts independently from the DNB. The Extension's papers often are teaching tools and used in dance studios and classrooms; the DNB Extension for Education and Research is separate from the DNB collection in the archive.

The Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute at Ohio State is the larger division under which the DNB archival collection falls. The Research Institute includes a large collection of media, photographs, ephemera, administrative paperwork, and design artwork related to various styles of theatrical performing arts.⁸⁵ Like many university archives, the majority of their holdings have been donated, but OSU's theatre and dance department have an exceptional alumni pool to work with; some of OSU's dance and theatre students have become nationally and internationally recognized figures in their fields, so the library works with those individuals and estates to ensure that their papers are donated to the OSU special collections.

⁸⁵ Ohio State University Libraries, "Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute: Collection Development Policy," Ohio State University, <https://library.osu.edu/tri/collection-development>.

The DNB collection is one of over 400 collections within the Theatre Research Institute,⁸⁶ and due to the size of OSU's dance collections, they are in the process of hiring for a newly created position: Curator of Dance. The current head of OSU's Special Collections, Nena Couch, can read music notation and various forms of dance notation from the 15th through 18th centuries, but is not confident reading labanotation beyond a beginner level. Because of this, the new Curator of Dance is required to read labanotation at an intermediate or advanced level.⁸⁷ This requirement demonstrates the importance of the DNB collection and its scores to the OSU Special Collections and greater university. Couch reiterated this when she said, "The DNB collection is one of our most heavily used collections for the performing arts division. The scores get used frequently, the photographs get used frequently, a lot of the materials in that collection get used by on campus and visiting scholars and through distance requests."⁸⁸

Couch recalled one research request that demonstrates the breadth of the DNB collection, evolutionary nature of dance, and the importance of having staff members proficient in reading labanotation. An eighth generation Hawaiian hula dancer scheduled a visit to OSU and requested one of the hula scores from the DNB collection. The researcher, however proficient in hula steps and traditions, could not read labanotation. Couch organized for someone from the university proficient in labanotation to work with the researcher to decode the hula score from the mid-20th century.⁸⁹ Through the collaboration between the researcher and the reader, the team found that

⁸⁶ Ohio State University Libraries, "Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute: Special Collections," Ohio State University, https://library.osu.edu/collections?combine=&tid_1%5B%5D=30.

⁸⁷ Nena Couch, interview with Sonja Carlson, March 4, 2019.

⁸⁸ Nena Couch, interview with Sonja Carlson, March 4, 2019.

⁸⁹ Nena Couch, interview with Sonja Carlson, March 4, 2019.

in the few decades since the score was written, there have been several changes in dance execution and technique. This experience demonstrated to library staff the importance of having a strong labanotation reader on staff, and is an example of the ways in which scores can be used for research instead of purely for restaging. The evolutionary nature of dance, especially traditional cultural dances, makes the versatility and detail of labanotation useful for reflective study. The technique changes that were uncovered could be regional differences or the result of a broader evolution, but they are important to document either way and researchers would benefit from a larger pool of scores.

In addition to managing the original paper scores and addressing any preservation needs that arise through a high volume of use, OSU manages some digital media within the DNB and greater dance and theatre collections. These include video recordings of performances, audio assets, and digital photography. The library, however, does not manage any scores notated digitally using programs such as LabanWriter, LabanReader, or KineScribe because of their technical requirements. Furthermore, Couch and OSU Assistant Professor Hannah Costrin are finishing up an oral history project interviewing notators and stagers from the DNB, which will be added to the the OSU digital collections upon completion. “It may be an ongoing project,” noted Couch, but because it was organized with OSU Institutional Review Board, the current project will conclude and the new Curator of Dance will have the opportunity to design a more open ended interview project.⁹⁰ This project could continue to be associated with the DNB, or be designed to fit the broader dance and theatre collections.

⁹⁰ Nena Couch, interview with Sonja Carlson, March 4, 2019.

NOTATOR AND PROFESSOR VALARIE WILLIAMS

Many ballet dancers choose to enter apprentice programs or pre-professional programs in their pursuit to become a professional ballerina, but there are also university BFA and MFA programs in dance. Some of these programs are at arts-centered schools such as The Juilliard School in New York, Boston Conservatory at The Berklee School of Music, and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, while others are a part of larger universities such as Ohio State University, Indiana University, New York University, Florida State University, and UC Irvine.

While labanotation isn't used by repetiteurs in the Balanchine trust, it still is offered by a few university dance programs, not because of its archival nature, but rather because it is a tool that helps dance students access dance history and otherwise inaccessible repertory. In other words, while the process of recording dance through writing is archival in nature, this is not the primary focus of teaching it to university dance students.

Valarie Williams is a professor in the Ohio State University Department of Dance and certified notator through the Dance Notation Bureau. Williams was first introduced to labanotation while an undergraduate student at Juilliard. At the time, all Juilliard dance students were required to take two years of labanotation; entranced by the doors it opened for her studies, Williams took labanotation all four years. Williams learned labanotation from Jill Beck, a “dynamo teacher,”⁹¹ who championed the use of labanotation as the “primary dance research language of the future” with “revolutionary potential... to change the world of dance and dance

⁹¹ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

education.”⁹² Growing up in rural Texas, Williams never imagined being able to access dance history through essentially primary resources. “It was fun to be able to access these master works that I’d heard about my whole life growing up in rural Texas, but never seen. So there I was getting to dance them and read them.”⁹³ Williams continued, “I saw the usefulness in that I could dance the history and so dance history came alive... there we were learning *Air on a G String* and Isadora Duncan dances. It was just so amazing.”⁹⁴

As a professor, Williams views the study of labanotation as an avenue for dancers to view the steps from an analytical perspective rather than as a series of movements to execute and study for performance. She noted that labanotation “requires a lot of logical analysis. You really have to think of it as a progression. It’s also like language because you get this cluster of symbols that mean something when all put together. In that way, I think it’s useful because students get to look at movement in a different way.”⁹⁵ This follows Laban’s perspective that a detailed notation method akin to music scores would “allow for a deeper comprehension of the artistic achievement of the dance.”⁹⁶ For researchers and students, being able to separate the steps from the lighting, ambiance, and music of a performance allows for movements and patterns to be broken down, enabling analysis of choreographic style and musicality.

⁹² Beth Megill, “New Identities New Voices: Introducing The Choreographer-Notator,” *Journal of Movement Arts Literacy* Vol 4, No 1, Art 8 (2018): 2.

⁹³ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

⁹⁴ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

⁹⁵ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

⁹⁶ Rudolf Laban, *Die Welt des Tänzers* (Stuttgart: Walter Steifert, 1920), 61.

As a notator, however, Williams views labanotation as a tool to access dance and dance history, not simply to preserve it in perpetuity. “I think most notators want their scores to be read. It’s like writing a book and never cracking it open. What you have to be interested in as a notator is writing for people to read your work and restage it because that’s the goal. The only way you’re preserving dance is if it’s able to live on stage again. If it just sits in an archive and is not activated, it’s not preserved. Preserving dance is performing dance.”⁹⁷ She has notated dances prioritizing their preservation over reperformance, such as cultural dances of the Hunan province in China, but the majority of her notation work is with living and artistically active choreographers.

Despite her love of labanotation, Williams is not a notation purist. In terms of notating and staging based on the score, Williams embraces the use of additional mediums and notes. These may include videos, motion capture documentation, journaling notes from the dancers or choreographer, and audio clips. When notating a work, Williams takes considerable time to prepare for the work in the studio, pulling from existing resources to understand the style of the choreographer so that areas of distinction or special details are known ahead of time. “Before ever going into the studio, you try to look at as much stuff as that person’s choreographed. Or if it’s a work that’s been choreographed before and they’re restaging it, you go find different versions of that work so that you really begin to know it and pick it apart choreographically before even entering the studio.”⁹⁸ Once in the studio, Williams interacts with the dancers without imposing on the rehearsal time:

⁹⁷ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

⁹⁸ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

“I literally ask the dancers to stay after the rehearsal and do one section. Or I ask about a specific eight count phrase -- I have these three steps, but what’s the fourth that you do? I try to find out what I’m missing so that I can see it again and have them help me... While you want to be useful, you don’t want to take over the rehearsal process. You have to be there to get the nuances and style. You go home at night, rewrite your notes, figure out what gaps you have so that you can go in the next day really ready to think about what you need to find in the next rehearsal. You have to go in knowing what you’re missing. You have to go in knowing what you don’t know.”⁹⁹

On some projects, Williams also asks the students or dancers to journal about the work, writing about what the work meant to them so that the intention and meaning is captured.

To notate projects, Williams and other notators utilize programs such as LabanWriter, LabanReader, and KineScribe. LabanWriter and LabanReader were developed at Ohio State University and KineScribe was developed at Reed College; all three programs are used to create and read born-digital labanotation scores. These programs are not compatible with newer iPad and iMac operating systems, however, forcing users to maintain legacy computers so that their scores can be accessed.¹⁰⁰ Links to download the programs still exist on the OSU and Reed College websites, but the programs would not work on more recent computers. The programs are able to print the scores but not edit or write new steps, eliminating the functionality of the program. Faculty members from Reed College and OSU have met with the programmers to discuss workarounds and possible solutions, but even if someone funds an update, the three programs will continue to face issues related to upward migration and incompatibility. This is an issue facing the entire digital arts community, not only dance, and yet there are no communal solutions outside of maintaining legacy computers and constant donor or grant funding for programming updates.

⁹⁹ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

Williams has also utilized motion capture technologies when notating a work. “You have to be conscious that what you see in the studio is what you need to capture. If you have video running at the same time, or you can bring in some dancers and motion capture part of it, that’s all great information for the next person who takes your score and has to transform it into the dance again.”¹⁰¹ Motion capture is a new technology being used within the dance field that requires dancers to wear special sensors and perform in a space set up with cameras and a software program uses to sensor’s movements to animate a digital figure. While the information created through motion capture is detailed and doesn’t require translation, the technology is often prohibitively expensive and thusly is used in special situations. Williams has worked with motion capture, most recently on a National Endowment for the Arts' grant-funded project to capture an Anna Sokolow piece. This project required motion capture technology because of the intricate partnering work:

“When we did the Anna Sokolow with Repertory Dance Theater, part of that NEA grant was to motion capture two of the duets that are hard to see on film or video because they’re sort of all over each other in multiple different ways. The motion capture, in that instance, was able to highlight how the man and woman moved and how she twisted herself down around and essentially dies. In that case, we matched the motion capture with the video and with the score, so you can see it all on the screen.”¹⁰²

In this case, motion capture was used because capturing the piece through notation and video did not create a detailed enough final product. Williams’ goal for the Sokolow project was to capture the piece to the best of her abilities so that it can be accurately restaged and she included funding for motion capture in the grant proposal.

¹⁰¹ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

¹⁰² Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

When staging a work from a score, multimedia resources are often used to supplement what is in the written labanotation. “I’m a big proponent of having multiple sources. That’s not true of everybody, but that’s my own personal bias. Of course, when I’m taking someone else’s score and translating it back to create the work again, I use as many different sources as I can,”¹⁰³ Williams said. “I don’t just believe in having the score. I look at images, I try to see different videos or films or reel to reel, whatever’s available, I’ll take advantage of it.”¹⁰⁴ Labanotation captures elements of the movements and steps, but this written record can miss details, be supplemented by other mediums, and sometimes be incorrect.

These practices described by Williams demonstrate that notators play an active role in the creation of a labanotated dance score and that scores are not always seen as a singular, authoritative record. Despite the years of training required to be a certified notator, and the long, involved process of notating a dance, the final product remains subjective. This subjective quality is demonstrated by some dances being notated by different people at different times and the scores being different. “You have to take into account that the score is one notator’s viewpoint of one moment in time with a particular set of dancers and that particular choreographer’s style at a moment in time. You have to situate it and know that that score may have changed, that dance may have changed, something may be different,”¹⁰⁵ Williams said. While this complicates the “authoritative” nature of writing and archiving dance, dancers, choreographers, and people within the dance community see this as a part of the culture; dances

¹⁰³ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

¹⁰⁴ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

change and evolve throughout the choreographer's career, making exceptions or changes to fit the strengths of the cast. Having multiple scores of the same piece demonstrates the fluidity of choreography, and researching the differences between scores can illuminate stylistic changes and choreography amendments that fit the strengths of the cast.

In addition to the physical movements, the stylistic and musical qualities of each choreographer are important to notate because these qualities are what make a work distinctive and often are the details that researchers and staggers seek. Williams worked with an Ohio State University graduate student who was staging a Balanchine piece from a score, and in this process, Williams had to familiarize herself with Balanchine's repertory.

“While I've watched Balanchine and shared studios with the School of American Ballet while at Juilliard – I knew about the style, but I didn't *know* the style. I hadn't lived the style, so you approach it by gathering a lot of other information and making sure you really know what is clear and what's not clear. In the score, we found several instances where the convention was different. For a turn in a Balanchine work, you don't plié the back leg like the common convention, you start from a straight back leg and then go. We found places in the score where they had the common convention with the plié as opposed to a straight back legged fourth position. So, you have to be aware of the styles even if you didn't get the chance to dance them yourself.”¹⁰⁶

This stylistic difference described by Williams is a distinctive element of Balanchine's style and choreography. It is unclear whether the bent-leg notation was the result of staging, dancing, or notator error, but recognizing the discrepancy is the result of Williams familiarizing herself with Balanchine's conventions; without such study, this detail could have been overlooked and the restaging could have followed the misinformation provided by the score.

Some notation projects require more preparation than others depending on the notator's familiarity with the choreographer. Williams was already familiar with Sokolow's style when she

¹⁰⁶ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

began working on the aforementioned grant-funded project. During William's undergraduate studies at Juilliard, Sokolow was the choreographer in residence, so Sokolow's movements and style were not foreign to Williams' brain and body. Williams said, "I had the privilege of working with Sokolow at Juilliard as an undergrad... so her style was familiar. It's good to pick styles and people you do have a connection with."¹⁰⁷ Despite this familiarity, Williams admitted that she checked out books from the library to learn more about Sokolow's life and any evolution of her style. Williams said, "You can never revisit something too many times because you learn something every time you do it. Every time you do it, you learn something new."¹⁰⁸

These notes on style are written onto the page alongside the movement notation, combining symbols and words to create a synthetic and interactive record. These written notes can describe significant or tricky areas of the choreography, the intention of the movement, and any other information that may arise during rehearsals and be beneficial to dancers in the restaging process. Where these word notes are on the score is up to the notator, but Williams likes to put them alongside the corresponding movements or phrases. "I think the more word notes, the better. Write on the page. Some of the notators like putting a bunch of word notes at the front, but they're not there when you're reading. I'd rather have two staves on a page rather than four and have all my word notes there so I can see what each person has to do because it says 'I need to feel x.'"¹⁰⁹ The placement of these notes is similar to the difference between

¹⁰⁷ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

¹⁰⁸ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

¹⁰⁹ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

footnotes and endnotes, and Williams points out that when restaging a work from a score, having the notes on the same page as the movement is the easiest and most beneficial.

The creation of a score as a record of a choreographed dance is not always for the purpose of the restaging. Some of Williams' projects, like the Sokolow project, are funded with the purpose of restaging, but other projects are done for the purpose of creating an archival record. Williams explained,

“The Bebe Miller piece was created with the hope that it would be restaged, and it is being restaged. The revision of the Yvonne Rainer *Chair Pillow*, my hope was that it would be restaged, and that's probably one of the most used scores at the Dance Notation Bureau. However, when I did the Chinese Hunan province dances, those are kind of sitting in the archives. It wasn't a Western concert dance, so I didn't think it would be restaged. It was more of an archival, critical look at a particular dance from a particular province in China.”¹¹⁰

Some choreographers actively want their works notated because it preserves their style and life's works for future generations to enjoy through performance, but writing a dance using dance notation does not ensure that it will be restaged. The detail and versatility of labanotation allows dance archives to include historic and cultural dances, and these notation projects are done so that a record of the dance exists, not necessarily with the intention of reperformance.

¹¹⁰ Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY JEROME ROBBINS DANCE DIVISION

Celebrating its 75th year of operation, the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library (NYPL) is located in the Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center and claims to be the “largest and most comprehensive archive in the world devoted to the documentation of dance.”¹¹¹ In addition to housing copied dance scores for the DNB, the Dance Division includes circulating and research collections with clippings, rare books, iconography, and manuscripts. The Division also continually adds to their collection through moving image and oral history primary source documentation initiatives.

The Moving Image Archive of the Dance Division began recording live dance performances in 1967 because Jerome Robbins and other founders believed that the ephemerality of dance required documentation beyond notation and written description.¹¹² Since its inception, the Original Documentation project has accumulated over 2,600 recordings. Daisy Pommer, the current Librarian and Producer of Archival Recordings for the Dance Division, worked at the PBS series *Dance in America* before receiving her MLIS and joining the NYPL team.¹¹³ Pommer works with the dance curatorial team to select about 30 performances and panels to record every year. These live events are selected based on many criteria, including the current collection development areas, the performance venue, and the size and resources of the performing company; barring any union opposition, the library likes to give a copy of the recording to the

¹¹¹ New York Public Library, “About the Jerome Robbins Dance Division,” New York Public Library, 2019, <https://www.nypl.org/about/divisions/jerome-robbins-dance-division>.

¹¹² Daisy Pommer, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹¹³ Daisy Pommer, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

company and choreographer so that they can use it for future fundraising, publicity, and restaging efforts.¹¹⁴

Because New York is a dance capital, the recorded performances typically take place in the city. Pommer said, “often there may be something that’s debuting across the country but then they come to New York, so it doesn’t make sense for me to hire a crew out west. We do occasionally do shoots in California, we did one in Atlanta last year, so we try to stay in America.”¹¹⁵ The size and genre of the companies varies because the Division is focused on providing researchers with an array of resources. The Original Documentation program covers all videography and post production costs, but performances are recorded with the understanding that the dancers donate their services.¹¹⁶

Since the creation of the Original Documentation program in 1967, recording performances has become increasingly accepted among choreographers. Pommer said, “When the project began back in the 1960s, choreographers were somewhat apprehensive about having their work recorded because people may copy it, people may look at the recording and not come to the performance. That view has fallen to the wayside now, people are much more eager to have their work recorded.”¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the recording technology has become much more compact, making the process less of a disruption for the theater and performers alike.

¹¹⁴ Daisy Pommer, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹¹⁵ Daisy Pommer, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹¹⁶ Daisy Pommer, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹¹⁷ Daisy Pommer, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

The recording of the performances requires a unique set of videography skills. Once a performance is selected for recording, Pommer hires videographers who understand the specialized needs of dance photography and the needs of dancers. “It’s a very specific skill,” Pommer said, “to be able to capture the choreography archivally.”¹¹⁸ She continued:

“They need to have a good eye. They need to be able to frame the dancer so that the heads and hand and toes are all visible. They have to be able to follow... Another thing is, we want them to be capturing entrances and exits. We want them to have a sense of when they need to show the dancer in space versus when it’s okay to get a little closer to capture more of the details. They need to be musical. They usually are then working with the choreographer to edit the material, so they need to have a good sense of musicality and movement so that they edit the piece properly.”¹¹⁹

While videographers can be trained in the specialized needs of live performance capture, many of Pommer’s videographers are former or current dancers and have acquired years of institutional knowledge on important performance details. This understanding of dance and performance culture is important because videographers only have one chance to capture the performance. The videography team therefore watches a preview performance and speaks with the choreographer to discuss the most important elements to capture.¹²⁰ The team uses two or three cameras (HD if possible) to record a performance and edits the footage together to create a final product, available at viewing stations at Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.¹²¹

Legacy performances captured on video, U-matic, and film have been, or are in the process of being, converted to digital files and added to the NYPL digital collections thanks in

¹¹⁸ Daisy Pommer, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹¹⁹ Daisy Pommer, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹²⁰ Daisy Pommer, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹²¹ Daisy Pommer, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

part to grant funding. Because of copyright, about 95% of the performances can only be seen on-site. Each performance has its own catalog record in the NYPL system and the performances that have been incorporated into the digital collections have unique links in the catalog records that allow for viewing at any of the catalog computers, not only the designated viewing booths connected to a playback server in the basement. The library manages the digital masters and the playback footage for the performances alongside the library's greater digital holdings, not by the dance division itself.

The resources and planning that Pommer and the Dance Division devote to expanding the Original Documentation collection make the department's commitment to archiving dance apparent. As a prolific choreographer, dancer, and Associate Artistic Director for Balanchine's newly formed New York City Ballet, Robbins had a deep understanding of dance, choreography, and dance culture. His perspective on dance and his vision to record choreography through multiple mediums have clearly been a guiding light for the Dance Division.

The multidimensionality of the collection is furthered by the Dance Division's ongoing Oral History Project. Started in 1974 and "responding to gaps in written scholarship about dance, the Oral History Project creates opportunities for artists to speak at length and in depth, openly and thoughtfully, about their careers and their views of dance."¹²² Dance Division founder Genevieve Oswald and the Oral History Project initially focused its efforts on documenting eight prominent figures in ballet and modern dance: Frederick Ashton, George Balanchine, Martha Graham, Léonide Massine, Alexandra Danilova, Alicia Markova, Ninette de Valois, and Lucia

¹²² Imogen Sara Smith, "Jerome Robbins Dance Division of The New York Public Library," Dance Heritage Coalition, 2012, http://www.danceheritage.org/treasures/nypl_essay_smith.pdf.

Chase.¹²³ These documentation efforts followed a cluster model, meaning that dancers and collaborators associated with the eight figures were interviewed about the personalities, working methods, creative process, and relationships with the figures.¹²⁴ These first several interviews described a global, complex, and dynamic dance field, demonstrating that the Project's scope was much broader than the eight original artists.¹²⁵ For these reasons, and the natural evolution of the oral history field, the model for the project shifted in the 1980s from the cluster model to life story interviews where each participant describes their own life story instead of their proximity to others.¹²⁶

Around this time, the Dance Division's Oral History Project began the AIDS Oral History Project. Because of the overlap of the dance and gay communities, the AIDS epidemic greatly affected the dance world, inspiring the NYPL to use oral history as a way to capture the voices and experiences of people with HIV and ensure that their legacy as artists was preserved.¹²⁷ The project shifted again in the 1990s as the project was expanded to focus on less prominent voices that have not warranted biographies or extensive research, at least not yet. The current Oral History Archivist for the Dance Division, Cassie Mey, is continuing this effort:

"I'm really trying to find and amplify the voices of people who haven't had a platform to share their story. This includes at-risk stories and people who are in dance genres outside of the dance division's focus on concert modern and ballet, although we've always tried

¹²³ Imogen Sara Smith, "Jerome Robbins Dance Division of The New York Public Library," Dance Heritage Coalition, 2012, http://www.danceheritage.org/treasures/nypl_essay_smith.pdf.

¹²⁴ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹²⁵ Cassie Mey and Emma Rose Brown, "Oral History Selections for Robbins Foundation Newsletter," unpublished, provided by Mey.

¹²⁶ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹²⁷ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

to expand outside of those genres and acknowledge that dance is much larger in scope in terms of the communities that are practicing dance. I'm constantly trying to push the field of what we're collecting with oral histories, recording with people and communities that aren't as well represented in the archives here."¹²⁸

For Mey, this recently has meant focusing on oral histories reflecting the tap, Broadway, and African dance communities. Through a possible collaboration with breakdancing pioneer Mr. Freeze, the Oral History Project is working to expand into documentation of the hip hop dance community.¹²⁹ This avenue would mean a slight change from the current model; Mey explained, "The model we've been working under, we tend to record with people who are at the end of their career or in their 70s, but with certain communities, as explored during the AIDS oral history project, the interviews need to happen earlier. With hip hop and the early breakdance communities, people are dying younger, so it's important to interview them earlier rather than wait."¹³⁰

A dancer since childhood, Mey grew up in Denver, CO and worked at the public library as a teenager, laying the foundation for what would become her professional path. While receiving her BA in Dance from Mills College in Oakland, Mey worked at the college library. After receiving her BA, Mey danced professionally in New York for over 10 years and in 2009 became the Oral History Assistant at the NYPL.¹³¹ Upon receiving her MLIS from Pratt, Mey catalogued the Merce Cunningham audio collection and became the Oral History Coordinator in 2016. Throughout her professional life, Mey thought that she would leave the dance world

¹²⁸ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹²⁹ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹³⁰ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹³¹ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

behind, but she “kept getting called back to dance. Dance has been so impactful for me and it is a bit of a service based community where each generation gives back to the next. There’s something about it that, for me, has called me back to give back and be of service to future generations because dance has given me so much.”¹³²

Mey is also active in the oral history community, attending Oral History Association conferences and networking with others in the community, and it is from this greater community involvement that she has created a vision for the future of the Oral History Project. Mey has been working on creating a community-based model for the Project to ensure that oral histories can reflect the diversity of the dance community.¹³³ This model loosely follows Dave Isay’s StoryCorps, a nonprofit oral history initiative modeled after the WPA interviews of the 1930s and oral historian Studs Terkel. Since its foundation in 2003, StoryCorps has collected over 200,000 oral history recordings through mobile and permanent recording booths and a phone app,¹³⁴ proving that oral histories don’t always have to be expensive, timely, and resource intensive. This community based effort would not replace the professionally planned and recorded oral histories in the Dance Division collection, but would be a way to collect additional stories without taking away from the existing resources.

These new initiatives are where Mey sees the most value in oral history, as the medium lays the groundwork for future scholarly exploration. “Oral history is primary documentation, so if there are oral histories, future researchers can hopefully write on the other genres that need

¹³² Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹³³ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹³⁴ StoryCorps, “About StoryCorps,” Storycorps, 2019, <https://storycorps.org/about/>.

more representation, publication, and scholarship.”¹³⁵ Oral histories create two mediums of documentation that may be made available to researchers: the audio file and a typed transcription. Despite its insight and primary source classification, many researchers at the NYPL Dance Division often overlook the Oral History Project collection due to the assets being time-based.¹³⁶ “Many people come in and just want to read the transcript, and I think a lot of information is lost if you don’t hear the human voice and the dynamic between the interviewer and the narrator,” said Mey, continuing that in future programming she’d like “emphasize the importance of considering the audio as the primary document and not the transcript, and moving away from the written word as representational to the oral landscape that’s created in an interview, which is very rich with qualitative information.”¹³⁷ It is through the audio recordings that researchers can glean information about the relationships, emotion, and intertwined dance community

The chemistry between the interviewer and the narrator (or interviewee) is a key element of planning oral history interviews, especially ones that illuminate the dance culture and community. Each person who participates in the Dance Division’s Oral History Project has a personalized set of questions and an interviewer who works with Mey to create the most illuminating interview. When beginning the planning process for an interview, Mey asks the narrator for possible interviewers because the relationship between the two is crucial to creating a safe space, and therefore the most enlightening final product. Mey said,

¹³⁵ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹³⁶ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹³⁷ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

“I’ve been experimenting with pairing narrators with dance collaborators or students of theirs... I’m moving away from pairing narrators only with scholars because I think practitioners lend an insight and a type of conversation that can be a bit deeper and more open ended. I’m not saying that scholars don’t have a lot to offer, so I have worked with prominent scholars and critics as well. Some people would prefer to have a dance reviewer or scholar interview them. In the dance field there’s a lot of overlap between practitioner and scholar. It’s more rare that I hire and work with just oral historians. It’s more important that the interviewer has a deep knowledge of dance and the history of dance because it is a subject based project. The depth we’re seeking in these interviews requires someone who is knowledgeable about dance.”¹³⁸

By focusing so much thought on the connection between the interviewer and the narrator, Mey is conscious of the ways in which the interviews capture and reflect the individual connections between artists and the greater dance community so that multidimensional information is available to future researchers.

In addition to capturing significant information on the interpersonal relationships between figures of the dance community, the oral histories also capture the intrapersonal elements of dancers and choreographers. The source of artistry and inspiration can often be deeply personal, so the interviewees may not be forthcoming or want certain elements of their interview redacted from the public record. “Dance artists are embodied artists, so the personal private and the public artist lines are very complicated,” reflected Mey.¹³⁹ “Working with sensitivity and trying to give narrators agency around where they want to allow the public into their lives and where they want to keep their own experiences private is a challenge and fascinating exploration within the project.”¹⁴⁰ For this reason, Mey focuses significant time on negotiating permissions: “We balance keeping the trust and protecting those that have participated, and also knowing the

¹³⁸ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹³⁹ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

¹⁴⁰ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

intention of the project is for the public and to create a historic record that's an inquiry into the lives of people in the dance field. How the material is used in research and publication and how we care for the rights of the narrators yet allow for public investigation is constantly balancing act that I believe is unique to dance oral histories."¹⁴¹

Between the Original Documentation video project and the Oral History Project, the NYPL's Jerome Robbins Dance Division is working to create primary source documentation of the current dance community and its natural evolution over time. The institution has spent years developing and evolving its programs, and other groups can use the work of the Dance Division as a model for their own collection development.

¹⁴¹ Cassie Mey, Interview with Sonja Carlson, March 5, 2019.

ANALYSIS AND LIVING ARCHIVES

Despite being varied in their location, resources, and user groups, the Dance Notation Bureau, Balanchine Trust, Ohio State University, and New York Public Library Jerome Robbins Dance Division have similar methods of documenting dance's ephemerality. The practices of these institutions demonstrate that there is no single overarching authoritative medium to document choreographed works and ballet culture. Instead, each research institution has chosen a multi-resource approach to capturing the art form's embodied and ephemeral qualities. This diversity of practices debunks any notion of the authoritative nature of a single type of record when it comes to dance collections.

The detail captured by labanotation positioned the method to be an authoritative record of dance, but this is complicated in practice. Nevertheless, as demonstrated with the Balanchine notation example from Williams, labanotation, however detailed, is sometimes incorrectly written. Issues with labanotation are further complicated when applied to cultural dance forms, as evidenced by the hula notation anecdote at OSU where the score captured one iteration of the practice, but was unable to capture the evolutionary elements of hula dance practice. To combat these issues, iterative documentation would be necessary, but the cost of labanotation is often prohibitively high, leaving many works with a single notation score. Some dances, especially those by well-known choreographers such as Balanchine, Robbins, and Cunningham, may have two or three scores or drafts in the DNB catalog, each from a different staging or dance company, but this is an uncommon practice and funding is often applied to capturing unscored works.

To avoid the reiteration of incorrect steps and information resulting from using incorrect extant documentation, staggers often choose to reference multiple resources. It's notable that Williams, a person with decades of experience with labanotation reading and writing, utilizes videos and other resources in her research when approaching a restaging. Knowing that resources of all kinds are utilized by researchers and dance professionals reinforces the need for multimedia documentation practices.

A surprising finding that further reinforces the need for multimedia documentation is the understanding that repetiteurs for the Balanchine Trust, including Darla Hoover, do not use written scores in their restaging research. This does not take away from the authoritative nature of labanotation, but instead speaks to the training required to access labanotation scores. Dancers who join professional companies and apprenticeships, for instance, are often left without access to labanotation training, which is taught within dance degree programs such as that of OSU.

Williams reflected on how learning labanotation gave her access to ballets that she would otherwise not be able to learn,¹⁴² but for dancers such as Hoover, who are a part of a ballet company and have access to people who have performed the pieces and have embodied knowledge of the choreography, the need to learn labanotation never emerges. Hoover reflected, "I didn't feel the need. When I started staging, sometimes I didn't even need many notes because I knew the steps and remembered so much. Just viewing a video tape was enough to jog my memory... I felt like I understood my own notes better than having to learn another system because in my system, I could put down only the notes that I needed to know."¹⁴³

¹⁴² Valarie Williams, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 18, 2019.

¹⁴³ Darla Hoover, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 28, 2019.

For Hoover, restaging a piece is a negotiation between her embodied knowledge, learned from Balanchine's ballet mistress Rosemary Dunleavy, and using performance videos courtesy of the Balanchine Trust to reactivate forgotten details. This prioritization of a dancer's embodied knowledge demonstrates that within the ballet community, learning a piece from an experienced ballet mistress is akin to working with a primary source. For researchers, however, access to these individuals is limited, but video documentation of some rehearsals with Balanchine and Dunleavy exist within the NYPL Dance Division Digital Collections and as a database subscription.

For dance and choreography researchers, collections such as those at the DNB, OSU, and NYPL feature resources that, when used together, paint an insightful and detailed picture not only of the physical steps and style, but also of the culture and inspiration that led to a work's creation. Without information such as that found in the oral history initiatives at OSU and NYPL, background on the creative process and relationships between choreographers and dancers would be difficult to find, since a labanotation score, however annotated, and performance video recording speak to a singular staging, and often not to the original staging.

Iterative performance documentation, meaning documentation of the minute differences between stagings or performances, is difficult to record and often does not exist in public or research collections because of the resources such an undertaking would require. Some ballet companies video record their performances for personal record keeping purposes and thereby maintain a company archive of video assets. This is true for the San Francisco Ballet (SFB), which maintains a digital asset collection of performance videos, and an archival collection of press materials. The Museum of Performance and Design (MP+D, formerly known as the San

Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum) is the official repository of SFB materials, but the company maintains an in-house company archive for administrative materials that are frequently recalled and used internally or for press publication.

Supriya Wronkiewicz, an archivist who splits her time between the MP+D and SFB's institutional archives, explained that the dance company's archives do not include any choreographic documentation besides performance videos, which are recorded for documentation of the company and dancers, not restaging purposes.¹⁴⁴ Wronkiewicz works closely with SFB's digital asset team, but much of her work is with paper-based materials: photographs, press kits, donor relation letters, and union-related contracts and paperwork.¹⁴⁵ Despite being the company's archivist, Wronkiewicz does not have access to all the audiovisual assets held by the company: "there's a master video archive that's maintained by the production department. I can't get into that archive because a lot of the video and audio recordings are tied to collective bargaining agreement restrictions. Even dancers will only get access to certain levels of materials for personal use."¹⁴⁶ Union collective bargaining agreements, copyright, and strict records retention schedules rule many of the assets Wronkiewicz manages, making it incredibly difficult for records to be used by outside researchers. There has never been an opportunity for Wronkiewicz to participate in union negotiations or otherwise advocate for the benefits of a more open archive; instead, the assets are used for publicity and internal purposes, unavailable to the public.

¹⁴⁴ Supriya Wronkiewicz, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 8, 2019.

¹⁴⁵ Supriya Wronkiewicz, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 8, 2019.

¹⁴⁶ Supriya Wronkiewicz, interview with Sonja Carlson, February 8, 2019.

In addition to her work with SFB at the MP+D, Wronkiewicz worked with the Dance Heritage Coalition (DHC) as a fellow and the finding aid coordinator.¹⁴⁷ While in these positions, Wronkiewicz published papers advocating the restructuring of a “living archive” in association with performing arts collections:

“In the case of organizations and individuals specializing in various forms of performing arts, much can be lost if archival intervention occurs [when the organization or person ceases to exist], rather than while the organization and individual are active in their work. Active performing arts companies (dance, theater, music) are essentially living archives. Their archival holdings are working collections... Companies cannot simply shed documentation, even if they so desired, because active, functional applications for the materials exist.”¹⁴⁸

By activating the archive for dancers, the idea of a living archive supports Valarie Williams’ belief that the best way to preserve dance is if it is activated through reperformance.¹⁴⁹ The living archive also identifies how important it is for archival entities to have ongoing relationships with performing entities. This is true for most of the institutions discussed in this paper: the Balanchine Trust regularly works with NYPL and also with companies around the world to stage Balanchine’s ballets; the Dance Notation Bureau helps facilitate the restaging of ballets using labanotated scores and provides scores for research and restaging to Ohio State University. While the NYPL Jerome Robbins Dance Division isn’t directly supporting a performance company, its resources are publicly available and people travel from around the world to utilize the collection.

¹⁴⁷ Dance Heritage Coalition, “DHC Staff: Supriya Wronkiewicz,” <http://www.danceheritage.org/staff.html#supriya>.

¹⁴⁸ Supriya Wronkiewicz, “Dance Companies as Living Archives: Protecting the Future by Preserving the Present,” in *New Directions for Special Collections: An Anthology of Practice*, ed. Lynne M. Thomas and Beth M. Whittaker (Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited), 103.

¹⁴⁹ This was established in an earlier section when Williams was quoted as saying “The only way you’re preserving dance is if it’s able to live on stage again. If it just sits in an archive and is not activated, it’s not preserved. Preserving dance is performing dance.”

The concept of a “living archive” was also addressed in a white paper presented by the DHC in collaboration with Independent Media Arts Preservation, the International Guild of Musicians in Dance, and the Theatre Library Association.¹⁵⁰ This paper identified four models for strengthening living archives: ecosystem mapping, shared resources and services, training and peer-to-peer support, and the development of an archiving curriculum for students.¹⁵¹ These models work to build support, communication, and share resources among the dance community, but do not address methods of documentation or how community based dance archives are able to publicize their collections. This publication and outreach is critical in order for the resources to be utilized by researchers or supported by larger archives and libraries in a manner similar to the relationships between the DNB, NYPL, and OSU.

Prior to the white paper, the DHC published *Documenting Dance: A Practical Guide*, which included information on dance notation, film and video, and motion capture techniques,¹⁵² demonstrating a focus on documenting the ephemeral aspects of choreographic works. Published in 2006, this guide is due for revisions and did not include oral history as a documentation method; based on the use of oral histories to document dance at NYPL and OSU, and the medium’s ability to provide context for other dance primary sources, oral history is a method that should be added to a revised edition of *Documenting Dance: A Practical Guide*. While oral histories may not be able to document choreographic information, the medium does provide

¹⁵⁰ Imogen Smith et al, “Strengthening Living Archives: A Plan for Empowering Archives and Communities,” 2015: 1.

¹⁵¹ Imogen Smith et al, “Strengthening Living Archives: A Plan for Empowering Archives and Communities,” 2015: 12-15.

¹⁵² Libby Smigel, *Documenting Dance: A Practical Guide*, ed. Martha Goldstein and Elizabeth Aldrich (Washington, D.C.: Dance Heritage Coalition, 2006).

critical context and can be executed without extensive resources, as demonstrated by the StoryCorps model.¹⁵³ The white paper identified next steps for implementation, but it is unclear what next steps have been enacted since its publication in 2015 because the DHC merged with Dance/USA, a national dance advocacy group, in March 2017.¹⁵⁴

The documentation published by the DHC in both the practical guide and the white paper on living archives can help smaller ballet companies across the country establish and activate their archives, but having these collections available for outside users is also important. Some of what is documented by these companies will fall under copyright or union restrictions, but having collections that are open to use by both scholars and dance professionals will only benefit the field as a whole by providing a more plentiful variety of resources for analysis and restaging purposes.

Overall, the methods of documentation and requirements for use by both dance professionals and researchers call for more of a continuum view of documentation that considers the perspective of the record creator, funding institution, and intended users of the records. According to Sue McKemish, the records continuum model adopts a pluralist view of recorded information and “characterizes records as logical objects, belonging to a special genre of recorded information made up of the documentary traces of social and organizational activity.”¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the records continuum model “takes a multidimensional view of the creation of documents as part of our activities (proto record-as-trace), their capture into records systems

¹⁵³ StoryCorps, “StoryCorps DIY,” <https://storycorps.org/participate/storycorps-diy/>.

¹⁵⁴ Dance/USA, “Dance Heritage Coalition Integration,” <https://danceusa.org/dhc-integration>.

¹⁵⁵ Sue McKemish, Franklyn Herbert Upward, and Barbara Reed, *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Records Continuum Model.” Boca Raton, FL: Taylor & Francis, 2010, p 4447.

(record-as-evidence), their organization within the framework of a personal or organizational archive (record-as personal/corporate memory), and their pluralization as collective archives (record-as-collective memory).”¹⁵⁶ While this model has largely been constructed and applied to archives and record keeping practices in Australia, the continuum model and multidimensional view of document creation can explain the iterative nature of dance documentation and how dance records can mean different things to different people at different times throughout the record’s lifespan. For example, a labanotated score created to inform reperformance can later be used by dance scholars for research purposes, and dance students could use the same document to learn labanotation.

The model demonstrates that documents, their creators, and the factors influencing their creation can all contribute to a document’s value, but values others than those that were originally intended can arise throughout its lifetime as well. Using the records continuum model, “relationships between evidence and memory, between the private and the corporate, between the archive as an instrument of restriction and the archives as a liberating force can be discussed within its framework in both practical and speculative fashion.”¹⁵⁷ This model helps explain how interactions and time transform documents into archival evidence that can be used by a variety of users and purposes. The relationships between creators, documents, and users that the records continuum model illuminates are only enriched when additional documents and context exist, creating new connections and information for dance practitioners and scholars to use.

¹⁵⁶ Sue McKemmish, Franklyn Herbert Upward, and Barbara Reed, *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Records Continuum Model.” Boca Raton, FL: Taylor & Francis, 2010, p 4448.

¹⁵⁷ Sue McKemmish, Franklyn Herbert Upward, and Barbara Reed, *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Records Continuum Model.” Boca Raton, FL: Taylor & Francis, 2010, p 4454.

CONCLUSION

The interviews with dance and archive professionals at the Dance Notation Bureau, Balanchine Trust, Ohio State University, and New York Public Library Jerome Robbins Dance Division established three multimedia approaches to capturing the ephemeral, culture, and embodied elements of choreographed ballet. Additional institutions exist that collect dance-related materials, but many dance collections consist of static forms of documentation such as photographs, programs, and ticket stubs. These paper-based collections serve more to document a company's history, like the SFB archive, rather than the choreographed works that the programs describe. The mediums that have been established as forms of choreographic documentation, dance notation, videos, and oral histories, are not always found in the same collection, but they speak to a very different research focus and are utilized differently within the dance community as well.

These types of resources are in demand, as demonstrated by the popularity of the NYPL Dance Division and the international researchers that utilize their collection. Because the methods of documentation and need for such documents are now known, a possible next step might be to increase the number of institutions collecting choreography-focused ballet documents. If focusing on this dance genre alone might be considered too restrictive, the same approach could be used to document broader variety of dance styles. A survey could be conducted to identify cities with established or developing dance communities, companies that frequently work with new choreographers, or that tend to stage works that have yet to be documented. The efforts and resources of the NYPL are unique to the arts-focused community in

New York, but similar work could be attempted in other cities across the country, even if they aren't dance capitals. Cities like San Francisco, Miami, Chicago, Boston, and Houston have internationally recognized dance companies that travel through New York from time to time with a singular performance program, but perform numerous new works and restagings in their local theaters.

These new institutions could build upon the methods of institutions such as the DNB, NYPL, and OSU that continually add to their collections and develop new programs. These new institutions can also vary in size and structure; some may be community based and others may be associated with local libraries or universities that have dance programs, but it is crucial that the institution have a professional dance company or dance school nearby to work with. The Balanchine Trust works closely with New York City Ballet and with companies around the world to disseminate the embodied knowledge of repetiteurs like Darla Hoover; the Ohio State University Special Collections work with the DNB Extension for Education and Research and university dance department; the Museum of Performance + Design has relationships with San Francisco Ballet and other dance and theatre groups in the Bay Area. These relationships ensure that the archive is activated and constantly growing, creating a living archive and promoting a give and take relationship between dancers and the collections.

These new institutions would not have to collect in all three mediums, but having a strong network for sharing resources and making them available would be critical. The institutions that do have all three mediums in their collection, OSU and NYPL, have more resources and work collaboratively with the DNB to acquire notation scores, arguably the most resource intensive documentation method. Additionally, the StoryCorps-esque community model for oral history

interviews that Cassie Mey has been developing could be adopted by other libraries to document significant artists or more broadly to other communities and disciplines that contribute to the local culture. The original video documentation project requires more resources to begin and sustain, but video documentation is something that can be executed by dancers, choreographers, or company administration.

Some professional organizations exist that focus on performing arts archiving and documentation. These include the Theatre Library Association and the Society of American Archivists Performing Arts Committee, but these groups are dedicated more broadly to the theatre or performing arts, not specifically to the needs of dance archives. Conversely, scholarly groups such as the Dance Studies Association (a consolidation of the Society of Dance History Scholars and Congress on Research in Dance) exists, but do not specifically address the interests of choreography archives and dance librarians. The Dance Heritage Coalition was dedicated to working with artists and sharing resources, so perhaps such work will now be continued by Dance/USA. This network would help bring awareness to all dance collections, the types of resources available, and the dance documentation field, and act as a centralized database for both researchers and professional dancers.

Another avenue for research is motion capture documentation in terms of how that technology could contribute to the dance documentation field. Professor Williams briefly discussed utilizing the technology in her projects, but it generally is quite expensive and requires special cameras and tracking nodes, removing the performance from its natural environment. Research on motion capture technology in the dance research field should consider these costs and whether the technology would be utilized by dance companies and researchers alike.

Additionally, the preservation needs of these born-digital files and the software they require should be considered; programs such as LabanReader, LabanWriter, and KineScribe were adopted years ago but now are facing challenges in the wake of forward technological migration. Any new documentation technologies adopted by the dance community should avoid similarly challenging programs because of the high costs associated with reprogramming and file conversion.

The interviews and research conducted for this thesis demonstrate a need for broader education and advocacy surrounding dance archives. This begins with the creation of a dedicated dance archives organization. Currently, many choreography archivists and dance documentarians network within the world of performing arts or theater librarianship and archivist groups such as SAA's Performing Arts Section, but the needs and methods of dance archives are not the same as those for musicians or actors. Furthermore, because dance studies were developed more recently than those of music or theater, dance is often a tertiary concern for these groups with sporadic inclusion in publishings or conference presentations. The Dance Studies Association (DSA) was founded in 2017 as the Congress on Research in Dance (CORD, founded 1969) and the Society of Dance History Scholars (SDHS, founded 1978) merged into one entity focused on serving the needs of dance researchers.¹⁵⁸ The DSA holds annual conferences, publishes original research, and would be an ideal organization from which a dedicated dance archives organization can be born. This organization could work with groups such as Dance/USA to help choreographers establish archives and spread awareness of their collections. Dance/USA would be another parent

¹⁵⁸ Dance Studies Association, "About," Dance Studies Association, accessed May 27, 2019, <https://dancestudiesassociation.org/about>.

organization to establish a dance archive association, but because Dance/USA offers archiving consultation services, this might pose a conflict of interest in the future.

Education, advocacy, and outreach for dance documentation can be carried out at a grassroots as well as an institutional level. At the grassroots level, a group like the aforementioned dance archives organization, Dance/USA, or the DSA can reach out to aspiring or young choreographers and provide them with helpful resources (such as the *Documenting Dance: A Practical Guide* published by the DHC in 2006). These resources should be primarily online so that they can be easily revised to reflect evolving standards and practices, and help choreographers find a documentation method that fits their needs. It's critical that these resources reach early-career choreographers so that they understand the value of documenting their work from the beginning rather than at a later stage, or even at the end of their careers. Having documentation from throughout a choreographer's career would help with legacy management and provide dance researchers with a plethora of useful information regarding the evolution of style, sources of inspiration, collaboration with other artists, among others. Choreography intensives and workshops such as the New York Choreography Institute, Regional Dance America Choreography intensive and other intensives offered by ballet schools (often through summer programming), and university BFA and MFA choreography courses are ideal locations for such outreach to take place. Ideally, classes introducing students to the different methods of documentation, copyright laws, and records management would be offered by educational institutions with choreography courses, but such curriculum takes time to be developed and the aforementioned choreography workshops and intensives provide a wider scope for initial outreach efforts.

To conclude, this thesis presents a preliminary study and basis for further development of the dance archiving field. While the methods used in this research can be applied to other performing arts disciplines, any next steps should be designed and executed with the betterment and expansion of the dance research field in mind. While still a relatively young field of study, dance research and dance documentation show great potential but require broader awareness and resource creation in order to compete alongside other performing arts disciplines. This awareness and resource creation work begins with the creation of a dance archives organization and outreach efforts that help artists identify documentation practices that fit their individual needs. Without such work, choreographers' collections will continue to be identified and established only at the end of their career, a situation that leads to works being lost and never performed again.

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