

UC Santa Cruz

UC Santa Cruz Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Dancing Beyond Dominance: An Exploration of Non-Authoritative Ballet Pedagogy

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5wn0f1b6>

Author

Petak, Kathryn Cilka

Publication Date

2024

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

SANTA CRUZ

**DANCING BEYOND DOMINANCE:
AN EXPLORATION OF NON-AUTHORITATIVE BALLET PEDAGOGY**

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THEATER ARTS

by

Kathryn Petak

June 2024

The Thesis of Kathryn Petak
is approved:

Professor David Cuthbert, Chair

Professor Patricia Gallagher

Professor Edward C. Warburton

Peter Biehl
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Table of Contents

Abstract	v
Acknowledgment	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1	2
What is Pedagogy	2
The Standard Ballet Class	5
The Feminist Perspective on Education and Ballet Class	9
Dancers' Perspective on. Rigorous Training	12
Searching for Another Instructor	14
The Insular Experience of Dancers	15
Academic Pedagogy: Getting to the Roots	16
Chapter 2	17
The Rise of Authority: A Brief Overview	18
The Impact of Russian Pedagogy on American Ballet Training	20
Ballet in the Professional World and Rehearsals	23
How Docile Bodies Train Ballerinas to Embrace Thinness	27
Chapter 3	29
Diverse Teaching Methodologies	29
A Journey to My Theory	32
Yoga in Ballet Class	36

Journaling	37
Conclusion	38
Appendix A	40
Appendix B	48
Appendix C	52
Bibliography	55

Abstract:

Dancing Beyond Dominance:

An Exploration of Non-Authoritative Ballet Pedagogy

by

Kathryn Petak

While dance training is widely recognized for its benefits, my extensive experience in the field has revealed that the prevalent authoritative teaching methods often encourage a toxic environment. This research investigates the rigid obedience expected of dancers, the discouragement of questioning, and the normalization of potentially harmful and unethical practices within dance studios. Such environments stifle creativity and contribute to a culture of fear where teachers are viewed as figures of authority not to be questioned, and students are dissuaded from voicing concerns. This study explores the reasons behind these traditional teaching methods and proposes ways to cultivate a healthier, more equitable environment in dance education. Through this work, I aspire to contribute positively to the dance community by advocating for reforms that prioritize the well-being and empowerment of dancers.

In this thesis, I employ autoethnography to critique the elitism and entrenched superiority within classical dance, drawing on my extensive experience and the privileges I have observed as a dancer. This field is marked by a protective reluctance

against evolution from its current critical pedagogy. I argue for a pedagogical shift that recognizes student discourse as an integral part of the learning process, advocating for a classroom environment where every student is nurtured. Inspired by Paulo Freire's humanizing pedagogy and the insights of bell hooks, my goal is to create a dance class that encourages critical engagement, deepens technical understanding, and challenges dancers in healthy ways. This approach aligns with dance scholars' push towards more progressive and inclusive teaching methods. This thesis outlines the continuing implementation of new strategies tailored for the 21st-century student, aiming to create an optimal learning environment characterized by inclusivity, equity, humanity, and integrity. It challenges the traditional valuation of specific backgrounds and appearances, paving the way for transformative and thought-provoking experiences in the dance studio.

Acknowledgment/Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my committee. To David Cuthbert for supporting me and having my back, to Patty Gallagher for noticing my quiet potential, and to Edward Warburton for being an inspiration.

To all the teachers who believe that dance not only uplifts spirits but also inspires change and transforms lives.

Thank you to my committee, all my teachers this year, K.S., and my Mom and Dad.

Dancing Beyond Dominance:

An Exploration of Non-Authoritative Ballet Pedagogy

This thesis critically examines the authoritarian pedagogical practices deeply entrenched within formal educational settings in Western classical ballet training. For centuries, these practices have cast a shadow over the dance world, perpetuating a culture of control and coercion.

When I embarked on my research journey into ballet pedagogy, I intended to reveal the stark truths and pervasive physical and psychological abuses that often lurk beneath the surface of the ballet world. In presenting my findings, I aim to spark meaningful dialogue and catalyze collective action toward creating safer, more nurturing spaces for dancers to thrive that extend beyond the studio and positively impact dancers' lives outside the institution.

Many ballet teachers have received training in this harsh reality, perpetuating a cycle that values endurance over empathy. While this rigorous training can produce technically proficient dancers, breaking free from this unhealthy cycle and adapting a pedagogical approach that prioritizes the dancer's well-being is imperative.

Being a dance instructor, I am committed to furthering my dance education by regularly attending technique classes taught by other instructors. Additionally, I eagerly seized the opportunity to learn about various teaching methodologies from others in the dance community.

After reading about the shared experiences of fellow dancers who had faced similar challenges, my thesis research became a sanctuary. The stories I read validated my struggles, prompting the question: What drives dancers to maintain within the confines of a rigid hierarchical system?

While ballet's tradition of hierarchy runs deep, the necessity for transformative change becomes increasingly apparent. Though the scope of this research may be limited to the dance community, the findings offer valuable perspectives for personal reflection and analysis. By delving into the complexities of ballet pedagogy, this study serves as a guide for those who aspire to encourage inclusivity and innovation while transcending conventional authoritarian approaches.

Chapter 1

This chapter explores scholars' perspectives on education and ballet pedagogy, emphasizing the necessity for a more progressive approach to ballet instruction.

Drawing upon insights from the fields of education and dance, it becomes evident that there is a pressing need for innovation in dance training.

What is Pedagogy?

I see pedagogy as an art form. There is a similar artistry in how teachers connect with students in hopes of fostering and furthering their understanding. We come to the classroom to learn, experience, and grow. Teachers can profoundly impact students' lives by guiding their intellectual growth and inspiring their

aspirations and future success. We always remember our best teachers, and we always remember our worst.

According to bell hooks, an American scholar and prominent advocate of second-wave feminism, the classroom is inherently a site of contention and discord (hooks 134–135). In contrast, she advocates for the school to be a nurturing and intellectually enriching environment characterized by liberating collaboration between teachers and students (14). In her seminal work, "Teaching to Transgress," hooks defines this notion as the aspiration to amalgamate lived experiences and academic instruction, fostering a more profound and impactful learning experience (186).

If we go back to the origins of educational theory, to the Greek philosopher Socrates, and examine his methodology, we can see the relationship between teacher and student. In a brief yet helpful essay about the Socratic Method penned by Colorado State University's Peter Conor, he distills the Socratic Method as "a dialogue between teacher and students, instigated by the continual probing questions of the teacher, in a concerted effort to explore the underlying beliefs that shape the student's views and opinions. Though often misunderstood, most Western pedagogical tradition, from Plato on, is based on this dialectical method of questioning" (Kruse). Over time, this method has been augmented, employed, and abandoned.

For example, Brazilian thinker and educator Paulo Freire uses a Marxist class analysis in his book, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which examines the

relationship between colonizers and the colonized. He articulates that the issue plaguing the educational system lies in the perception that knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who deem themselves knowledgeable on those they perceive to be lacking knowledge. He contends that the flaw in the educational system is the teacher's role in merely "filling the student" with a preordained collection of factual information: students passively absorb whatever the teacher dispenses. Under this "banking" model of education, the teacher assumes sole possession of all knowledge.

Unsurprisingly, the banking concept of education regards students as adaptable, manageable beings. The more pupils work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness that would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. "The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they adapt to the world and the fragmented view of reality deposited in them" (Freire 73). Students' independent critical thinking and any spur-of-the-moment curiosity are diminished.

In *Discipline and Punish*, French postmodern thinker Michel Foucault argues that in this form of teaching, the students merely play a passive, receptive role (Foucault 135). This is based on Foucault's analogy of the 18th-century soldier, who is transformed from simply a man to a creation that can be meticulously shaped and molded (135). Like formless clay, he can be converted into the necessary machine through deliberate design (135–136). This comparison illuminates Foucault's argument that soldiers and students are shaped by the disciplines imposed upon them,

highlighting the pervasive influence of power and control in shaping human behavior and social roles. As a result, society produces what Foucault calls "docile bodies," which are self-regulated and habituated. While authoritative practices are still occurring in the academic world of the educational system, this thesis will examine the authoritative pedagogy used in Western classical ballet.

By its very nature, dance demands the direct presence and guidance of the instructor, going beyond the constraints of screens and textual descriptions. It is an art intertwined with the dancer's physicality. Dance pedagogy emphasizes rigorous attention to detail, necessitating precise observation, thorough analysis, and the nuanced task of breaking down and reassembling movements into a unified sequence. The role of a dance instructor is marked by an unwavering commitment and profound engagement, essential for facilitating each dancer's evolving journey.

The Standard Ballet Class

The traditional ballet class often exemplifies the very concept Freire critiques: the banking system of education. The teachers tell the students what to do, and they do it. The students then follow directions and apply corrections after the critique is given. This one-way flow of information mirrors Freire's notion of teachers depositing knowledge into passive students rather than fostering an active engagement and dialogue environment.

Despite their expansive, open areas for movement, ballet studios are meticulously partitioned for the focused study of dance practice. At the start of each

class, dancers work at the barre along the room's perimeter to practice and build fundamental techniques. Subsequently, dancers move to the center of the room where the teacher and students both face the mirror, and the dancers perform floor work. This involves step combinations, adagio, pirouettes, waltz, and jumps. The teacher observes and situates themselves so that they can view many students at one time. This spatial organization of bodies is inherently disciplinary, dictating where dancers can and cannot go and facilitating supervision and evaluation.

The dance class does not encourage critical thinking skills, and students do not question the teacher's information. They accept it. The teacher holds the authority with the only recognized source of knowledge. No other voices are to be heard unless it is a well-thought-out question. Teachers teach how they were taught and replicate the style they were trained under, even if it does not meet the needs of the students coming into the studio. This approach has stayed the same and has been handed down from generation to generation.

The previous editor of the *Dance Research Journal* and a professor, Jill Green, explored the pedagogical concerns regarding teachers' authority in dance education. She explains that while dance may be considered a "freeing" art form, dance teachers are not always self-reflective in mechanizing ballet students' bodies into an ideal form (Green 165). This lack of introspection can perpetuate a mechanistic approach to training that overlooks the individual dancer's needs and autonomy. Although teachers sometimes claim to help students learn, they are silencing them and training them to

act docilely (155). The "docile bodies" training in dance removes the student from understanding their body and puts them through habitual movement patterns that regulate the body as a training instrument. This can lead to unsafe pedagogical practices, which result in injury or pain as well as a general lack of self-confidence and well-being. Foucault portrays the 17th-century soldier as the epitome of bodily honor and respect, emphasizing that the soldier's physique is molded through discipline (Foucault 135). As previously stated, this discipline is described as a unique form of power that regards the body as an object and a tool. This conceptualization can be paralleled with the disciplined training environment of a ballet class, where dancers' bodies are similarly shaped and controlled. Disciplinary power makes the body obedient, responsive, and skilled, but it only achieves these traits because it becomes docile (Foucault 135). Dance education is a disciplinary power that trains dancers to become docile citizens in the dance world (Green). If Foucault had ever studied ballet, he would have said that the students' bodies were constantly under surveillance (Green 110).

Dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild describes a typical ballet class as a space where an individual or class "learns movement from the leader and performs it for her." For this relationship to be successful, the inherent relationship of the inferior dancer must aspire to the teacher's approval and acquiesce to their authority (Gottschild 11). Gottschild explains that the natural body is praised for having "good" feet (high arches), a sense of rhythm, an excellent turnout, or whatever fits the

teacher's aesthetic approval. This emphasizes how subjective physical prowess and beauty standards are ingrained within the training process, deeply affecting dancers' personal growth and artistic journey. The "ideal" is embodied in the teacher's favorite student, often placed at the front of the class and used as a model to demonstrate the combinations. This practice highlights the teacher's subjective standards, influencing the dance studio's learning environment and student dynamics. Dancers push themselves to obtain the perfect body with the ideal technique. Consequently, body image issues are prevalent in ballet. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that it represents an unrealistic standard that few can achieve. Many dancers have bad memories and have feelings of inadequacy from being yelled at, hit, and abused verbally (11).

Dance educators and scholars Edward Warburton and Carol Press write in their article, *Creativity Research in Dance*, that despite advances in research and training, many beginning teachers still hold onto the model where young dancers submit themselves unquestionably to the all-knowing teacher (Press and Warburton 1282). However, challenging the accepted pedagogical standards in ballet has long been considered untouchable in many circles. Dancers often face strong emotions such as fear and self-doubt prompted by the authoritative teacher, which is critical in developing the student's sense of self. A teacher's lack of empathy and care during dance training can seriously affect the students' self-image and creative work (1282). The growing awareness of the authoritarian legacy of ballet pedagogy has led many

scholars and educators to take responsibility for helping undo some of the damaging practices.

Feminist Perspective on Education and Ballet Pedagogy

Building on the discussion of authoritative pedagogies within dance training, it is pertinent to examine how similar dynamics manifest in the realm of feminist education. Since the 1970s, feminist pedagogy has highlighted gender as a central facet of human experience, shaping teaching and learning. Initially, its focus was on integrating women, their voices, and experiences into education as valid and essential sources of knowledge. As both a theoretical framework and a practical approach, feminist pedagogy has fostered gender equality within and beyond the classroom through individual, social, and institutional transformations.

Over time, feminist pedagogy has evolved to incorporate the complex concept of intersectionality, recognizing and valuing the diverse voices and experiences of those historically marginalized, silenced, or overlooked. In recent years, it has broadened the scope to address interconnected systems of oppression, encompassing race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, religion, ability, and other dimensions of difference (Currier 371). Furthermore, it has responded to critiques from trans and queer perspectives, challenging earlier essentialist views on gender and sexuality (371).

In ballet, there are deep-seated connections between women and the body that reveal women's vulnerability to cultural manipulation. Furthermore, from a feminist

perspective, the traditional definitions of empowerment through education are critiqued. According to Susan W. Stinson, the authoritarian pedagogy commonly employed in dance technique classes, while experienced by both men and women, has a distinct impact on women (Stinson 35). Many women embark on their dance training journey at a young age, typically between the ages of three and eight. From the beginning, dance instruction instills in young girls the expectation of remaining silent and obedient, reinforcing societal norms that govern childhood and womanhood.

In their seminal work "Women's Ways of Knowing," Mary Belenky et al. (113) illuminate the systemic silencing experienced by adult women, juxtaposed against the vocal prominence of men (Stinson 35). This silence manifests as a perceived state of mindlessness and voicelessness, where women feel subjected to the arbitrary authority of external influences (35).

Within this framework, women often perceive themselves as passive recipients of knowledge, capable of absorbing and reproducing information bestowed upon them by perceived authorities yet feeling ill-equipped to generate knowledge independently.

Central to this journey is the symbolic significance of "finding one's voice," a metaphor that resonates deeply with women as they transition from silence to critical thinking. Learning to speak represents discovering and asserting one's authentic voice and perspective.

The trajectory of male dancers in society often diverges significantly from that of women. Many males begin dance training later in life, typically during late adolescence or early adulthood. By this time, they have already started to form a sense of identity and voice. For these young men, dance training may be viewed as akin to military training—a temporary phase of necessary obedience rather than a permanent state. Once they have attained a certain level of proficiency, they wield the power to lead, choreograph, and create art instead of just dancing. This differing dance training experience may contribute to the observable differences in leadership within the dance community. Despite being a minority among dancers, men tend to be overrepresented in positions of authority and as recipients of grants. This phenomenon underscores the nuanced interplay between gender dynamics, societal expectations, and the unique pathways to leadership within the dance field.

In addition to perpetuating the archetype of the silent, passive woman, dance training amplifies societal pressures surrounding the female body. Students are confronted with a pedagogical objective that promotes an unattainable ideal, and every effort is met with relentless corrections. Moreover, they are dressed in leotards and pink tights that accentuates every perceived flaw, and their reflections are scrutinized in the unforgiving mirror.

Moreover, in many technique classes, emotional expression, deemed feminine, is suppressed, with students expected to leave personal concerns at the

studio door. In some instances, even physical sensations are disregarded, further reinforcing the notion of detachment and stoicism (Stinson 36).

Dancers' Perspective on Rigorous Training

In Foucault's paradigm of docile bodies, not all dancers perceive their instructors with disdain. Docility is cultivated through disciplined actions, as it regulates bodily operations and positions. For many, the rigorous discipline ingrained in ballet serves as indispensable preparation for the challenges of the professional dance realm. Some even interpret teacher criticism or sternness as a badge of honor, symbolizing the student's potential and talent. This viewpoint often justifies authoritarian conduct under the guise of nurturing artistic excellence, fostering an environment where authoritarianism in the studio is normalized. Students are encouraged to endure such treatment as an essential rite of passage into the world of dance. Furthermore, contemporary ballet instruction has faced criticism for its perceived leniency, with some branding today's dancers as "lazy." This reluctance to enforce discipline may hinder students' success in the professional world.

Foucault's concept of docile bodies can intersect with discussions on cult-like behavior, particularly in how power structures and disciplinary mechanisms operate within specific organizations or groups, such as ballet pedagogy. In Foucault's framework, docile bodies refer to individuals subjected to disciplinary practices regulating and controlling their behaviors, movements, and thoughts. They are disciplined bodies that are unquestioningly obedient, easily taught, and productive.

Institutions or authorities often enforce these practices to maintain order and exert power over individuals.

Genius choreographer and director George Balanchine was revered almost as a deity by his dancers. Jennifer Homans, a dancer and scholar, disputes that the New York City Ballet was a cult, yet she concedes it had cult-like qualities. As the founder, George Balanchine personally chose his preferred dancers, crafted their image, and even selected signature perfumes for them, demonstrating his profound influence and personal investment in their artistic presentation. "Don't think, just dance," a mantra often attributed to George Balanchine and echoed by generations of his dancers, was more than a directive for mindless compliance; it represented a philosophy of obedience (Homans, *Mr. B* 394). As analyzed through Mary Belenky's feminist perspective, where women are to be silent and obedient, it highlights the patriarchal control embedded in traditional ballet pedagogy.

Balanchine also arranged the ballerinas' photoshoots with Vogue and introduced them to international stages. According to Homans, these dancers perceived these actions as if he were granting them access to a future beyond their current dreams (Homans 404).

According to Arthur J. Deikman in *The Wrong Way Home: Uncovering the Pattern of Cult Behavior in American Society*, the structure of cults is a prime example of authoritarianism, where obedience to a charismatic leader and adherence to a rigid hierarchy are emphasized over independent thought and personal autonomy

(Deikman 73). Authoritarian leaders emphasize obedience, loyalty, and the suppression of criticism, often prioritizing hierarchy over individual autonomy or truth. Autocratic leaders usually exploit the human desire for a solid and idealized parent figure, which can lead to a dependency fantasy among their followers. Individuals may feel pressured to conform to the group's beliefs at the expense of their critical thinking (71–73).

In essence, the authoritarian dynamics observed in cults mirror the regimented atmosphere common in ballet training environments. Both settings prioritize obedience to authority, conformity to established norms, and the development of a collective identity at the expense of individual autonomy and critical inquiry. They also include rigid hierarchies, unwavering devotion to a leader or ideology, and insulation from external influences. Understanding these parallels sheds light on the complex interplay between power, influence, and identity formation within both contexts. Moreover, a pervasive aura of exclusivity and superiority permeates these environments, fostering participants' sense of belonging and identity.

Searching for Another Instructor

Scholar Robin Lakes observes that the prevailing advice for dancers to leave instructors whose demeanors they find intolerable assumes that all dancers have alternative options. This assumption overlooks many dancers' potential need for alternatives (Lakes 8).

Furthermore, Lakes highlights the existence of "survival guides" designed to equip dancers with strategies for navigating such demanding environments, often emphasizing self-adjustment for stress management or counseling. However, she offers a grim reflection, suggesting that in a world seemingly resistant to reform, the student's behavior, rather than the instructional practices, must undergo adaptation to initiate any meaningful change.

The Insular Experience of Dancers

The dancing profession is unique and comes with its own set of challenges. Dancers are taught strict discipline from an early age, which sets them apart from their peers who pursue traditional academic pursuits. As a result, they miss out on exploring literature, mathematics, and the "moratorium period" that Erik H. Erikson describes as crucial for exploring one's identity, experimenting, and shaping one's future (Mazo 163).

While their peers use this time to pursue academics, relationships, dating, and introspection, dancers are forced to exist in a world where these everyday activities are scarce. As dancers transition into adulthood, the gap between their monastic existence within the company and the outside world becomes more apparent. Co-founder of the School of American Ballet, Lincoln Kirstein's mockery of dancers questioning their "right to have a life" is embodied in his blunt response: "No, you do not." This poignant response is a stark reminder of many dancers' challenging reality (Mazo 164).

Academic Pedagogy: Getting to the Roots

Henry J. Perkins's "Since Socrates: Studies in the History of Western Educational Thought" argues that many philosophers have advocated for authoritarian models of education rather than progressive or student-centered approaches from the time of Socrates to the modern era. He suggests that these thinkers, including prominent figures like Plato and Augustine, laid the groundwork for what is now considered basic or rudimentary educational practices. He writes that the authoritarian tendencies in these philosophers' teachings are rooted in intellectual arrogance and can lead to intellectual cruelty when applied to education (Blight and Perkinson 344). Perkinson's exploration of this problem likely involves a critical examination of the epistemologies of eminent thinkers. He frames his intellectual inquiry by asking, "How is truth best conveyed from the teacher to the pupil?" (343).

The 17th-century education model viewed students as passive vessels to be implanted with fixed knowledge. In British philosopher John Lock's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he describes students as blank slates, or "tabula rasa" (Uzgalis Book II). This era birthed metaphors such as "empty vessels," "blank slates," and "balls of wax," which reflected the prevailing belief that students were devoid of knowledge and needed to be filled with or molded by their teachers.

In the 20th century, there was a transformative shift in the understanding of the purpose of education, evolving from the mere transmission of knowledge to a focus

on human growth and development. This perspective acknowledges that genuine growth cannot be imposed from the outside; it must be nurtured from within.

The influence of early to mid-20th-century dance innovators in dance pedagogy has impacted how dance is taught today. Many innovators were educated in Western European pedagogy's first or second era, characterized by strict discipline, rigorous training, and hierarchical teacher-student relationships (Lakes 9). The teaching models these dance innovators experienced during their formative years often shaped their teaching methods as they entered the world of dance pedagogy. Their authoritative demeanor reflects the pedagogical approaches they were exposed to and internalized.

Education has long served as a foundation for socialization, integrating students into the broader community. Through education, the values, traditions, and social norms that underpin the community are instilled in the next generation, fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity.

Chapter 2

In this chapter, I begin a historical exploration of ballet, tracing the roots of its authoritative pedagogy and examining why such structures persist. By delving into the archives of ballet history, I uncover the pivotal figures and institutions that shaped its pedagogical landscape, instilling a culture of hierarchy and rigidity.

Drawing parallels between the history of education and contemporary ballet teachings, I illuminate how ingrained power dynamics and traditional teaching

methods have endured over time. I share my story and shed light on the detrimental effects of rigid pedagogical approaches on student development and well-being.

The Rise of Authority: A Brief Overview

The intertwining of power and privilege forms the vivid backdrop of ballet's origins. From its inception, kings and rulers utilized ballet as a canvas to showcase their luxury, authority, and cultural refinement. Often, grand productions were commissioned to mark royal occasions, commemorate victories, or forge diplomatic ties, exemplifying ballet's role as a symbol of wealth and prestige.

As ballet's journey unfolded, it traversed diverse landscapes of history, transitioning from the chambers of royal courts to the inclusive stages of public entertainment. Once the exclusive domain of tsars and aristocrats, ballet gradually democratized, becoming accessible to broader audiences.

During Louis XIV's reign, dance evolved beyond mere displays of royalty and power; in 1672, classical ballet emerged under his patronage, laying the foundation for its enduring legacy. Ballet's rich history of impeccable technique, beauty, and grace remains synonymous with ballerinas today. Traditional teaching methods, rooted in centuries-old practices, continue to shape ballet instruction, emphasizing discipline, order, and respect within the structured classroom environment. The dynamic between teacher and student is established early on, with a focus on correctness and repetitive movements.

However, the departure of King Louis XIV from the dance scene marked a transformative moment in ballet's evolution. Professional dancers took center stage, replacing aristocratic courtiers and captivating audiences with precision and elegance. Ballet, like a dancer gracefully navigating through intricate choreography, has adapted to changing times and environments, retaining its allure and significance across centuries.

In the 19th century, Parisian ballet found itself competing with opera. Adapting to the allure and poetic essence of the Romantic era, it transformed. Behind the Paris Opera Theater curtains, the foyer de las dance (a spacious room adjacent to the stage for company warm-ups) became a rendezvous point for the audience and dancers alike (Anderson 103). The ballet in these performances evolved into a tantalizing dance of attraction, with men casting admiring glances and ogling at the ballerinas (Banes 3839). In contrast to its fading allure in Paris, August Bournonville's artistry found vibrant expression in Denmark and beyond, cementing his reputation as one of the preeminent choreographers in the annals of ballet history. Meanwhile, in the grand theaters of Russia, Petipa ushered ballet into a golden age of splendor and luxury. Crafting lavish story ballets like "The Nutcracker" and "Swan Lake," he transported audiences to realms of enchantment and romance, captivating the aristocracy of St. Petersburg.

In the United States, where jazz thrived as a vibrant expression of democracy, ballet faced skepticism. However, Balanchine embraced the energetic spirit of jazz

and pioneered "American Ballet," demonstrating ballet's capacity to absorb and integrate diverse influences and to continually reinvent itself in response to changing cultural landscapes.

The Impact of Russian Ballet Pedagogy on American Ballet Training

Authority and power dynamics are prominent subthemes frequently associated with students' experiences of dominance and oppression. Historically shaped by its royal patronage, ballet training naturally reflects the hierarchical structures of autocratic societies. European ballet instructors who relocated to the United States profoundly impacted ballet classes in America and continued to convey foundational educational beliefs associated with ballet training. Unlike in Russia, France, or Denmark, ballet teachers in the United States did not enjoy classes full of pre-selected students or adults whose training was supported by the government. With the classical ballet tradition emphasizing authority and submission from the class, ballet teachers in America who insisted on fully replicating the technique discovered that they had a vastly different discipline than their students. Their teaching went beyond Freire's critique of the "banking method" or Foucault's "Docile Bodies." It went to the form of abuse, sometimes including the use of punishment and maltreatment like the withdrawal of attention, humiliation, and belittlement, that participants' experiences were not just the result of a pedagogical style but of harmful teaching practices. There is a difference between structured, high-demand pedagogical choices in the ballet studio and harmful practices.

Italian dancer Stefano Mascagno (1877–1950) launched a school in New York City in 1915 that ran for nearly two decades. He was an acclaimed teacher across the United States and was a model for ballet teachers nationwide. As an instructor, he became famous for the severity of his teaching methods, which earned him great respect in the early-20th-century ballet world. Each student had to acknowledge Mascagno with reverence (curtsy or bow) as they entered the room. Once class began, his students remained silent until Mascagno signaled for the class to start with a cane tap (Zeller 2637). His teaching methods were detailed in a 1922 New York Times article titled "Dance Instructors Flock to New York." The article recounts that he would maintain the tempo of his class exercises using two "sticks." If a student blundered, he would smash the sticks, and his wife would supply him with two more (2637).

The brilliant choreographer George Balanchine's arrival in the United States was a landmark in the history and development of American ballet (Zeller 64). Balanchine and philanthropist Lincoln Kirstein founded the School of American Ballet (SAB) in 1933, and in 1948, his famous company, New York City Ballet, was established. While Balanchine defied the traditions of classical ballet in his choreography, he upheld the traditions of the past in his school, drawing on its profound imperialist heritage. He quickly established the extreme thinness of the ballerina, leaving an indelible mark on the collective consciousness of choreographers and ballet masters alike. If a ballerina gained weight, he would temporarily remove

them from performances until they slimmed down, bluntly remarking, "Too fat, dear." To emphasize his point, he posted a notice on the company board, handwritten and stark: "BEFORE YOU GET YOUR PAY, YOU MUST WEIGH!" signed ostentatiously, G. Balanchine (Homans 383).

With a commanding presence akin to that of a military leader, he orchestrated his school, reminiscent of Foucault's disciplined soldier. He implemented a structured framework with precision and discipline, ensuring each student progressed methodically through the ranks (DeFrank-Cole and Nicholson 75). The teachers were offensively authoritarian, and the dancers were expected to imitate, absorb, and obey. Girls in their early teens worked at the barre like sweatshop girls sat at sewing machines (Mazo 260). Their faces were marked with concentration and intense dedication (260). They were forbidden to dance elsewhere. Steps were analyzed, and the dancers practiced with almost religious zeal. The dancers never questioned the steps or style approach, which mirrors Michel Foucault's analysis of how institutions, like the military, employ regimented systems to shape and control individuals. Foucault's "disciplinary power" concept highlights how such frameworks order physical movements and govern behavior, molding individuals into ideal subjects within a given societal structure. This process of learning and rehearsing remains today.

Balanchine's Russian heritage permeated in an authoritative direction and a pedagogy reminiscent of military discipline. Choreographer and educator Antony

Tudor's legacy echoes through the halls of prestigious institutions such as the Juilliard School and American Ballet Theater, where his influence shaped the landscape of dance. Since its inception in 1952, Juilliard has been known for excellence in performing arts education, with Tudor's pedagogy guiding its trajectory (Siegel 767). "I have struck dancers," confessed Antony Tudor, underscoring the intensity and rigor that characterized this era of ballet training (Lakes 5). "I have bitten little fingers that stuck out too much. I have slapped wrists. I have threatened to throw people out of the window. People do not usually learn unless there is a little pain involved" (5).

He would drill his dancers with Russian theater practitioner and actor Konstantin Stanislavski's approach. By masterfully integrating authority and discipline with actor autonomy, he employed intense mental tasks known for "breaking" dancers using cutting personal attacks that pulled them into spirals of self-hatred until they felt empty and lost (Homans 409). Professional dancers were frightened by Tudor. Former principal dancer and star of the American Ballet Theatre, Cynthia Gregory, admitted to being intimidated to death by Tudor. She described her experiences with him as challenging. She stated, "Tudor liked to torture you. He looked at you and immediately knew your weak spots."

Ballet in the Professional World and Rehearsals

As beautiful as it is to watch ballet, there is a disconnect between the transformative and empowering messages conveyed on the stage and the authoritarian teaching methods employed in the dance class and rehearsals. Dancers possess a

remarkable gift: the power to transport audiences from the mundane to the extraordinary. Long after the performance ends, the audience remains immersed in a realm, yet the dancers remain immersed in the ballet world. The realm behind that is much less glamorous than the glittering façade of the stage.

The iconic Martha Graham, pioneer and founder of modern dance, who has choreographed some of the most beautiful groundbreaking works that still resonate deeply with audiences today, has been known not to extend the same respect and humanity to her dancers, who played a crucial role in bringing her art to life. Dancer Paul Taylor, now the director of his own company, Paul Taylor Dance Company, offered insights into what it was like rehearsing with Martha Graham; Taylor revealed that Graham's pedagogical approach was rooted in the belief that inflicting pain was necessary for dance instruction (Lakes 5). She would push her students to their limits and use their breaking point as an educational tool. Under the "banking" model of education described by Paulo Freire, the teacher is seen as the sole possessor of knowledge. Similarly, Graham would position herself as the sole repository of knowledge and the ultimate judge of aesthetic perception in the dance studio (10).

Stuart Hodes, a former dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company, recounts a distressing episode from his time in the classroom: "She [Graham] was testing me. She raked her nails down the front of my chest to elicit a deeper contraction. She dragged her nails across my inner thighs to enforce a wider turnout. Later, as I sat on the floor in second position, she noticed the marks her nails had left

and remarked, 'I wonder what your girlfriend will think of that?'" (Lakes 11). Graham would resort to physical abuse as a method of instruction. Metaphorically, she also leaves her mark, branding the student as a display of power and dominance (11).

James Moore, a professional dancer who worked with renowned choreographer Jerome Robbins on various pieces, conveyed that Robbins' pedagogical philosophy regarded dancers as raw material similar to inanimate paint (Lakes 6). Robbins exhibited little regard for the thoughts or feelings of his dancers, viewing them as a distraction to his artistic vision (6). This approach starkly opposes the empowering educational ethos bell hooks proposes, highlighting a profound challenge for professional dancers in the ballet world, where respect, approval, and compassion sometimes feel scarce.

Often, language carries an implicit undertone of belittlement, subtly hinting at and perpetuating power imbalances. Language has a profound influence on how we perceive our bodies and our abilities. Words possess great potency, capable of inflicting unseen wounds upon the psyche. Edward Warburton underscores the potency of language in shaping our self-perception and how we view others. In his article, *Metonymy in Dance: Ballet Bunheads Take a Cognitive Turn*, he writes that this influence extends beyond mere words bestowed upon dancers; rather, it encompasses the profound impact words have on dancers' sense of identity and their relationship with their artistry.

Warburton explains that metonymy, a linguistic device that can transcend mere words, operates as a subtle yet potent tool of expression. It is not merely about naming but invoking layers of meaning, tethering the abstract to the tangible (Warburton, "Ballet Bunheads" 29). It is the scalpel of language, carving out individuals from the masses and highlighting the essence that defines them. Within the dance world, nicknames like "bunhead" and "empty suit" suggest a reduction of dancers to a singular, objectified state devoid of their multifaceted humanity. They imprint stereotypes on how words can paint how dancers perceive themselves. Warburton recalls in his article a time when, after a strenuous rehearsal, the ballet mistress turned to one of the dancers and said, "Hey, can we see a little less Madame Thunder-thigh and a little more Lady Grace?" (30).

The dynamics of authority and power in dance education create a complex web of tensions and inequalities that can significantly impact dancers' experiences and well-being. One vivid memory stands out: during a dress rehearsal at Yerba Buena, I was publicly shamed by my artistic director for failing to execute the correct head and shoulder position (*epaulement*). His words, magnified by the microphone as he sat among the audience, pierced through me, laying bare my perceived shortcomings before the entire company. Shedding tears in the privacy of the dressing room, I contemplated quitting. However, with the harsh reality of the ballet world's limited employment opportunities and opening night looming over me, I had no choice but to stay.

Many students and professionals express feelings of intimidation and describe certain teachers and directors as authoritarian figures, contributing to an atmosphere of perceived oppression within the dance studio. When learners are steeped in fear and intimidation, their capacity and willingness to engage in critical inquiry, creative exploration, and risk-taking are diminished. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to encourage a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that values dancers' voices and agency.

How Docile Bodies Train Ballerinas to Embrace Thinness

The prevailing aesthetic in dance demands an elongated, slender physique pushed to its utmost limits. Choreographers and directors, predominantly male, not only endorse but often insist upon attaining an anorexic appearance. Balanchine ballerina Gelsey Kirkland describes in her book *Dancing on My Grave* that even when she was less than a hundred pounds, Balanchine halted class to inspect her: "With his knuckles, he thumped on my sternum and my rib cage, clucking his tongue and remarking, 'must see the bones'" (Kirkland and Lawrence 56). Even in non-professional dance classes, self-criticism regarding one's body is normalized behavior.

Research conducted by Alter (74) revealed that weight was a recurring topic in most dance classes studied, with participants frequently expressing dissatisfaction with their physical appearance (Stinson 34). Similarly, findings from Stinson et al. (17) underscored the prevalence of negative body image perceptions among young

dancers, with comments such as "I do not like the way it looks" being commonplace (36).

In traditional dance settings, the body is often perceived as an adversary to be conquered or an object subjected to relentless scrutiny and judgment. This pervasive emphasis on physical appearance can have detrimental effects on dancers' self-esteem and mental well-being, perpetuating unrealistic beauty standards and contributing to issues such as disordered eating and body dysmorphia.

This authoritarian approach fails to equip dancers with the versatility needed for today's dance education. In an era that prizes adaptability, innovation, and collaboration, dancers must be confident enough to question norms, experiment with new ideas, and embrace the unknown. An environment characterized by fear and constraint stifles the development of these essential skills, leaving dancers ill-prepared for the dynamic challenges of the professional dance world.

Institutional norms and expectations further reinforce the power dynamics within dance education. Dress codes, behavioral regulations, and even monitoring of eating habits create a sense of control that permeates the educational environment, particularly in conservatories and other formal training settings. These practices enforce conformity and contribute to a disconnect between students and their bodily awareness, fostering feelings of intimidation and frustration.

Competition and cliques among students aggravate these tensions, exacerbating power imbalances and further alienating individuals from their sense of

agency and confidence. Moreover, students often perceive dance programs as alienating and teachers as unsupportive and threatening, leading to difficulties in assessment and feelings of inadequacy based on physical appearance or perceived lack of progress.

Chapter 3

In this chapter, I examine the contributions of dance scholars to a more progressive approach to ballet pedagogy. I discuss their innovative perspectives and integrate my own proposals for developing a non-authoritative teaching method in ballet.

Additionally, I delve into my pedagogical philosophy, underscoring the significance of encouraging autonomy, critical thinking, and self-expression among dancers. By adopting a less authoritative approach, I seek to empower students to take control of their learning experiences and fully express their unique identities.

Diverse Teaching Methodologies

Jill Green's Somatic Knowledge: *The Body as Content and Methodology in Dance Education* displays her advocacy for healthier dance education using "Somatics." Somatic authority focuses on what goes on inside the body rather than solely on what the body looks like (Green 157). In other words, somatic educators help students take ownership of their bodies by bringing attention to their inner bodies. According to somatic theorists, Western culture creates the myth that our body and mind are separate, which disconnects us from our internal body messages and the power to connect to ourselves.

Dance educators in diverse areas such as the United Kingdom and Australia have been increasingly incorporating the somatic approaches of leading dance theorist Rudolf Laban to better understand their dance class's internal impulse and kinesthetic movement experience. Laban is also known for his invention of Labanotation, a system of notation that analyzes and records movement. Warburton discusses the different skills needed to become a high-quality teacher in dance. Genuinely effective teaching requires foundational ideas in the discipline. Pedagogy requires the what, when, and how to present it (Warburton 8). He believes that dance educators need to have both content knowledge, which is familiarity with the steps and the technique, and pedagogical knowledge, which is familiarity with how to communicate the method to students (8). The art of teaching for understanding transcends mere recollection of steps and routines.

Artists and scholars Adesola Akinleye and Rose Payne's article, *Transactional Spaces: Feedback, Critical Thinking, and Learning Dance Technique*, discusses the attitudes about feedback and critical thinking in Western dance technique classes. They found that in order to foster a culture of critical thinking in the dance studio, feedback cannot simply be given to the dancer (Akinleye and Payne 146). Instead, feedback must be engaged with the dancer—it must be bi-directional and in a two-way conversation. The teacher must listen to and engage with the student's response (147). With this dynamic communication, critical thinking and technique manifest.

In her article "The Act of Making: Dance as Aesthetic Activism," Sherry Shapiro discusses how directing attention to embodied knowledge and nurturing aesthetic sensibility can elevate dance education into a platform for cultivating a deeply engaged community focused on power, justice, and ethical relationships. Picture a transformative journey through dance education, where entrenched norms yield a profound reawakening of the embodied self. Shapiro adeptly integrates her students' words and movement suggestions into choreography, transforming their expressions into tangible artistic creations (Shapiro 30). Furthermore, she fosters a culture of introspection and self-expression by encouraging her students to journal. Through this practice, they embark on a personal odyssey, documenting their experiences, aspirations, and reflections, thus enriching their journey of self-discovery within dance education.

A Brazilian dance educator, Isabel Marques draws deeply from her experiences alongside Paulo Freire in Brazil to shape her innovative approach. Reflecting on her challenges in the urban landscape of Sao Paulo, she discusses the limitations of traditional pedagogy in confronting the pervasive injustices. However, through her collaboration with Freire, she discovered a path toward empowerment, recognizing that ignoring social realities only perpetuates a cycle of helplessness.

Marques's passion for social justice and dance fuels her quest to integrate the two seamlessly. She envisions a learning environment where students explore the art of dance and engage critically with the tumultuous changes of our era. Her concept of

"context-based dance education," rooted in dance, education, and society, transcends mere movement to delve into profound societal issues. Whether addressing violence, communication, or gender roles, she seeks to foster authentic connections between dance and the human experience.

Central to Marques's philosophy is the notion of co-creation. She advocates for a collaborative approach where students and teachers actively shape dance and society. Through dance, she believes, individuals can harness their collective agency to effect meaningful change. By embracing the transformative potential of movement, participants are empowered to interact with the world in new and profound ways (Risner and Stinson 9–10).

A Journey to My Theory

Isadora Duncan inspires me with her visionary perspective on dance. She saw dance as a form of movement and a conduit for self-expression and transcendence—a deeply ingrained aspect of humanity. In her vision, dance emerges as a sacred medium, allowing the inner spirit to authenticate itself. Through dance, we embark on a journey of profound exploration, delving into the depths of our emotions, thoughts, memories, and collective histories.

Teaching a class prioritizes the growth and development of the students. It requires a commitment to nurturing their skills, fostering creativity, and creating a supportive learning environment. By embracing the educator role, the teacher elevates the learning experience, empowering students to reach their full potential. The

distinction between giving and teaching a class underscores the importance of pedagogical depth and student-centeredness. It highlights the educator's responsibility to impart technical expertise and inspire and mentor the next generation of dancers. The dance instructor catalyzes transformative learning experiences through planning and genuine student engagement, shaping dancers' skills, passion, and dedication to the art form.

As I delved into the literature, exploring various approaches to ballet pedagogy and ways to make it less authoritative, I embarked on a journey of research and exploration to determine which methods resonated with me as a dance educator. My vision for a dance class revolves around empowering students to discover their own voices, drawing inspiration from progressive educational theories. The holistic approach fosters physical strength, resilience, and autonomy, empowering dancers to embark on self-discovery while understanding their place within the dance world.

Integrating breathwork, precise cueing, imagery, and technical guidance into each ballet class can foster an environment of positivity, enthusiasm, and joy, nurturing students' confidence in their ongoing progress. Despite their challenges, I encourage students to view them as opportunities for growth, reminding them to trust their inherent ability to evolve gracefully and at their own pace. Before each class, I guide students in centering their minds and turning their focus inward, preparing them for the practice ahead (see Appendix A).

Using the integration of the Franklin Method and imagery into my teaching practice, I recognize their transformative potential in empowering students on their journey of movement exploration. Eric Franklin's innovative approach is a versatile toolkit, enhancing students' comprehension of their bodies in motion while emphasizing imagery as a catalyst for transformative change. Guiding movements through imagery cueing in ballet class can improve one's ability to improve the accuracy and efficiency of executing specific movements and refine overall movement execution. Furthermore, practicing imagery can be fun for the dancers. Through vivid mental imagery, dancers can enhance their technique, cultivate emotional expression, and deepen their connection to the art form. Whether visualizing a grand jeté's arc, the spine's lengthening, or the rib cage's relaxation, imagery infuses movement with intention, creativity, and nuance. It allows dancers to tap into their innermost thoughts and emotions for greater well-being (see Appendix A).

By allowing students to choreograph small segments of the combinations, I aim to foster their creativity and ownership of their learning process. I strive to guide students in discovering their dance style and unique voice, serving as guidance along their artistic journey. Students instinctively respond to music by moving in ways that resonate with them, following their internal rhythms and impulses. I also infuse the class with lively music, ranging from K-pop tunes to upbeat tracks by Taylor Swift. I prompt the dancers to tap into emotion from a personal perspective. I aim for them to

authentically delve into how a mood, when genuinely felt within their inner selves, organically influences their posture, focus, awareness of others in the space, and various facets of their alignment.

Collaborative choreography, such as choreographing combinations for ballet class, is an effective model for student dance composition. This approach significantly benefits students, facilitating quickly learning combinations and choreography. Engaging in choreographic projects within groups of students fosters increased involvement and diminishes apprehension about choreographing themselves and presenting to their fellow dancers. My goal is to cultivate an acute awareness of how internal experiences manifest in the fluidity of their bodily movements (see Appendix A).

I maintain flexibility in class structure, often moderating the combinations to suit the dancers' needs. I incorporate complex, detailed movements and syncopation to keep the dancers engaged and alert. For fouetté turns (a whip-like motion that propels the dancer into consecutive, fast rotations, famous in Swan Lake, where the ballerina performs thirty-two), I have discovered that playing the music without focusing too intently on the dancers helps them feel more at ease. Typically, they are more willing to attempt practicing this challenging turn when not under constant scrutiny. Rejecting Foucault's concept of "Docile Bodies" can liberate individuals from the constraints of imposed expectations and the pervasive scrutiny of surveillance. This freedom allows for a greater expression of self and autonomy.

Yoga in Ballet Class

I prioritize enriching students' physical consciousness and individual empowerment by incorporating somatic techniques. Somatic awareness sessions enable students to reconnect with their internal sensations and instincts, releasing them from bad habits and guiding them toward optimal alignment. Through these methodologies, instructors prioritize enriching their students' physical consciousness and individual empowerment instead of just doing what the teacher tells them (see Appendix B).

While dance classes prioritize positioning and alignment in the body, integrating yoga into the ballet class can elevate this awareness. The deliberate pace of yoga naturally lends itself to precision; for example, instead of mindlessly positioning your feet parallel (akin to sixth position in ballet or *tadasana* in yoga), you can meticulously align the outer edges with your mat, distribute weight evenly across all four corners, spread your toes, and anchor your pinky toes firmly. This attention to detail can greatly benefit dancers, especially when working in turned-out positions, ensuring a secure foundation for their footwork. By focusing on these nuances, such as the often-overlooked pinky toes or the subtle act of rolling over on the arches, you refine your ability to construct each pose meticulously from the ground up. This approach establishes a strong foundation, aligning joints with precision to bolster stability and cultivate strength. Additionally, bringing awareness to the toes can significantly enhance performance while dancing *en pointe* (see Appendix B).

Yoga enhances dancers' proprioceptive sensation and body awareness, fostering mindfulness during movement. Dancers can then apply this heightened awareness to their stage performances, ensuring correct alignment and reducing the risk of injury. Through yoga, they cultivate the ability to focus on the present moment, a crucial skill in injury prevention, anxiety, and performance optimization.

In addition, yoga emphasizes breath awareness, connecting breath with movement. This mindfulness practice encourages longer and deeper inhales and exhales, promoting relaxation and stability, particularly after challenging sequences. By integrating breath awareness into ballet, dancers develop interoception, or bodily awareness, further enhancing their overall performance and well-being (see Appendix B).

Rest is often overlooked in ballet class but essential for our well-being. Incorporating Savasana, or corpse pose, can bring valuable benefits. As dancers, we dedicate ourselves to technique and performance but must prioritize rest and rejuvenation. Savasana offers a precious opportunity to release tension, alleviate stress, and enhance mental clarity and relaxation. In today's fast-paced world, everyone can benefit from moments of rest and restoration.

Journaling

In writing studies, journaling is a powerful tool for students to forge their identities and grapple with their place in the world. Implementing journaling practices in the dance studio and asking students to write prompts such as things they are

grateful for, goals, and feelings enriches heightened engagement and meaningfulness in the classroom (see Appendix C).

Metacognition, the human capacity to reflect on, monitor, and regulate knowledge and thoughts, lies at the heart of this pedagogical approach (Koziol 2). This can be a valuable tool for dancers, as they gain insights into their strengths and weaknesses by encouraging self-regulation through writing. Psychological studies further underscore the emotional and therapeutic value of journaling. Engaging in personal writing has been shown to elevate mood and enhance self-control, contributing to holistic well-being and healing. Through journaling, individuals embark on self-discovery, introspection, and growth, harnessing the transformative power of written expression (2).

Conclusion

Dance education holds immense potential for positive impact; however, the prevailing approach of many teachers today must evolve towards a more democratic ethos.

Reflecting on the authoritarian history of ballet, I recognize the imperative to transcend traditional power dynamics and embrace a pedagogy rooted in inclusivity and empowerment.

By recognizing what makes us human, how we relate to each other, and how the world empowers each student as a partner in the educational process, we pave the way for a more inclusive and empowering ballet education. Whether adjusting to accommodate discoveries or refining my approach to better support struggling

students, I see teaching ballet as an ever-evolving journey toward growth and improvement. I draw inspiration from the students and continuously assess the effectiveness of my teaching methods.

Authorizing students to trust and honor their bodies as sources of knowledge is paramount. By nurturing a culture of inquiry and reflection, I aim to instill a sense of agency and ownership in each student's learning journey. The most meaningful progress occurs when students actively engage in learning, asking questions, offering observations, and collaborating with their peers.

Furthermore, in rejecting the "banking system," I am committed to promoting physical health and mental well-being among my students. Recognizing that a healthy body lays the foundation for a healthy dancer, I aim to cultivate a supportive environment where students can thrive holistically.

Appendix A

In this Appendix, I explore a holistic approach for adult and upper-education ballet classes that integrates mindfulness and creativity to enhance dancers' awareness, self-authority, and overall well-being. Influenced by contemporary practices and the need for less disciplinary methods, this pedagogical approach seeks to contribute to the evolving field of dance by offering an alternative framework for ballet training. By scrutinizing ballet's ideologies closely and honestly, ballet teachers can transform the classroom into a space where critical questions are asked and meaningful change is encouraged.

Before the class begins, it is essential to address the traditional requirement for ballet students to wear leotards and tights. This can reinforce ballet's elitist status and may not be comfortable for all participants, especially in adult- and college-level education. Allowing students to choose their attire can help them feel more relaxed and enable authentic self-expression. This approach creates a more inclusive and supportive environment, shifting the focus from adhering to traditional dress codes to the true essence of the art of dance.

Inspired by Professor Edward Warburton and the theories discussed earlier, my conceptualized ballet class aims to deepen students' understanding of their bodies and expand their movement qualities. I begin with a preparatory exercise before starting pliés: students lie on the floor, close their eyes, and focus on their inner sensations. They are encouraged to feel their breath, sense their weight against the

floor, identify areas of tension, and use their breath to release that tension. These relaxing exercises help ease the body, which, in turn, calms the mind. This creates a supportive atmosphere where participants feel more open and receptive to new experiences and insights.

While still lying on their backs, the class progresses to grounding exercises that begin with spinal movement exploration. By emphasizing awareness of the spine and legs through calm, simple, and lengthening movements, dancers can access their full genetic range of motion. These exercises include twisting from side to side, arching and relaxing the back, folding into a tight ball, expanding the body, and bridging and rolling through the spine. Incorporating movements targeting less prominent muscle groups, such as deep abdominal work and foot strengthening exercises, helps stabilize the core. Coordinated with breath, these exercises engage all the body's muscles, focusing on smaller and deeper stabilization muscles. Starting the class by working from the inside out and concentrating on internal strength enhances overall function and movement quality.

The dancers are encouraged to explore the concept of "width" in specific areas following the spinal exercises. For the lower ribs, they focus on breathing and expanding, allowing the area to soften and feel more expansive. They open and close their shoulders to sense the width across the upper body. The dancers then move their hips in various directions, experiencing the width and mobility in the hip area. For the pelvis, they tuck and release, feeling the width and stability of the pelvic region. This

exercise aims to develop a deeper connection with the spine and the body's sense of width. By exploring these aspects, dancers can improve their alignment, balance, and movement fluidity, leading to a more expressive and controlled performance.

After this exploration, the class transitions into pliés and then progresses to the other exercises at the barre, encouraging dancers to integrate their heightened spinal awareness and the concept of width into their movements. They are reminded to maintain a sense of length throughout the exercises, enhancing their overall alignment and movement quality. Additionally, they are encouraged to approach the movements artistically, feeling the movement come from within and remembering to breathe.

Dancing with others and communicating with an audience are essential aspects of a ballet performance, making it crucial for dancers to develop these qualities during technique class. Instead of standing in isolation at the barre, dancers can be encouraged to change their position halfway through or after one or two combinations. During center exercises, dancers can face partners while performing class combinations or stand in a circle at the end of class for their reverence. These activities help dancers learn to project their energy into the space, observe and appreciate differences in movement choices, and effectively communicate their observations about their peers' movement choices.

Imagery and metaphor play a significant role in understanding movement during a technique class. For instance, legs may be envisioned as reaching into the

ground like the roots of a tree, and arms as expansive as a peacock's tail feathers or used for balance like a tightrope walker's balance pole, providing stability and grace. Students can be creative, imagining their limbs and torsos, tracing bright and vivid colors through the air, and creating a dynamic interaction between their bodies and the movement pathways they form in the space. Encouraging students to generate their images and metaphors fosters creativity and personal connection to the movement, enhancing their overall experience and expression in dance. Using imagery as a navigational tool helps dancers nurture, strengthen, and experiment with various possibilities, teaching them to integrate these imaginative concepts into their technical practice.

In ballet training, the mirror often becomes a crutch for students, who rely on it to verify their movements. They become so accustomed to the reflected image that they coexist, expecting and focusing on it to judge their performance. This reliance assigns the mirror a judging role, causing students to forsake their perceptions and sensations in learning movement, forming opinions based solely on reflected images. In this way, the mirror image assumes an authoritative role, leading the student through a maze of roles: performer, perceiver, and critic. Consequently, the kinesthetic aspect must be addressed, as students need to internalize and understand their bodies in motion. The mirror image becomes the calibrator of performance, presupposing reality and truth for the student. Covering the mirror during barre

exercises is an effective method to encourage dancers to direct their awareness inward.

The use of ballet terminology can sometimes contribute to a sense of elitism. While those with a background in ballet training will be familiar with terms such as plié, tendu, and glissé, students who have not experienced such training may find this terminology alienating. Recognizing this, it is beneficial to discuss the actions of the movements in terms that enhance their quality, dynamic, or sensation. For instance, describing a plié as a bend of the knees or a tendu as an elongation or stretching of the leg and foot can help all students better understand the French terminology. This approach makes the terminology more accessible and inclusive, bridging the gap for those new to ballet.

Reflective responses to movement are encouraged through outside writing assignments or creative projects, such as mood boards or drawings. Students will also be encouraged to journal their experiences from class, noting areas for improvement and personal insights. Another approach involves students observing their peers during a particular exercise and providing positive feedback and constructive criticism. Afterward, students perform the combination again, incorporating the feedback they received and the feedback they provided. This method allows students to see their progress from multiple perspectives. Additionally, I facilitate small-group collaborations to delve into the conceptual processes involved in giving feedback to

peers. This peer-to-peer interaction ensures that each student can teach and learn, creating a deeper understanding of the movements.

Self-assessment writing in dance is crucial for personal growth and improvement. It encourages dancers to reflect on their progress, identify strengths and areas for development, and set achievable goals. By regularly evaluating their technique, performance quality, and emotional connection to the dance, dancers become more self-aware and can make informed decisions about their training. This process enhances individual skills and encourages a deeper understanding of the art form and a greater sense of ownership over one's development.

Materials Needed:

- Ballet slippers
- Comfortable clothing (no strict dress code)
- Hair away from face
- No big jewelry

Class Schedule:

Introduction

- A brief introduction to the class objectives.
- Emphasize the importance of mindfulness, internal awareness, and self-authority in ballet training.

Grounding and Spinal Movement Exploration

- **Warm-Up:**
 - Begin lying on the back with eyes closed.

- Focus on inner sensations: breathing, weight, and tension.
- Use breath to release tension and relax the body.
- **Spinal Movement Exercises:**
 - Twisting from side to side.
 - Arching and relaxing the back.
 - Folding into a tight ball and expanding the body.
 - Bridging and rolling through the spine.
- **Core Stabilization:**
 - Deep abdominal work.
 - Foot-strengthening exercises.
- **Coordination with Breath:**
 - Integrate breath with each movement.
 - Focus on engaging smaller and deeper stabilization muscles.

Exploring the Concept of Width

- **Lower Ribs:**
 - Expand and contract, feeling the width across the lower ribs.
- **Shoulder Girdle:**
 - Open and close the shoulders, sensing the width across the upper body.
- **Hip Joints:**
 - Move the hips in various directions, experiencing width and mobility.
- **Pelvis:**
 - Tuck and release the pelvis, feeling width and stability.
- **Integration:**
 - Develop a deeper connection with the spine and the body's sense of width.

Barre

- **Integration of Awareness:**
 - Transition to the barre without the Mirror

- Encourage dancers to integrate heightened spinal awareness and the concept of width.
- Remind dancers to maintain a sense of length throughout the exercise.
- Imagery and Metaphors
- Discussing Actions of Movement
- Change to a different spot at the barre
- **Practical Application:**
 - Focus on enhancing alignment and movement quality.
 - Emphasize internal strength and control.

Center: With the Mirror

- **Peer Feedback:**
 - Partner up and observe each other during a specific exercise.
 - Provide positive feedback and constructive criticism.
 - Perform the sequence again, incorporating feedback.
 - Separate the class into two groups and perform the combinations with the groups facing each other.

Let Go of the Gaze

- Perform some of the combinations away from the mirror
- Teachers should, at times, let go of the gaze
- **Group Discussion:**
 - Facilitate a brief discussion on the conceptual processes of giving and receiving feedback.
 - Encourage the sharing of personal reflections and experiences from the class.
 - Encourage journaling on the experience in class

Reverance

Reverance towards a fellow student in class or in a circle

Appendix B

Workshops

1) Yoga and Ballet Fusion Workshop

This workshop, blending ballet and yoga, aims to enhance dancers' physical and mental well-being through mindful movement. Beginning with breathing and meditation, it sets a foundational tone of mindfulness and relaxation, creating an optimal learning and personal growth environment. This practice helps participants to center themselves, let go of external distractions, and focus on the present moment. Breathing exercises, such as diaphragmatic and alternate nostril breathing, promote physiological relaxation, reducing stress and anxiety. Guided meditation further enhances this calm state, encouraging participants to observe their thoughts and sensations without judgment.

After meditation, the workshop moves to a warm-up inspired by ballet techniques to awaken muscles and improve flexibility and stability, followed by instruction on the fundamentals of ballet posture, alignment, and movement vocabulary. The session then transitions into a guided yoga flow tailored for dancers, focusing on balance, strength, and fluidity. Participants will explore the similarities and differences between ballet and yoga, reflecting on how each practice complements the other. Additionally, we will explore specific yoga asanas that support ballet techniques such as pirouettes, batterie, petite allegro, and adagio, providing dancers with targeted tools to improve their performance. The workshop

continues with a fusion session, combining ballet movements and combinations with yoga sequences, emphasizing fluid transitions, breath awareness, and mindful movement exploration. It concludes with gentle stretching, relaxation techniques, and shavasana to promote relaxation. Participants are encouraged to share reflections and express gratitude during the closing circle. The workshop requires comfortable clothing, ballet slippers, a yoga mat, a water bottle, and an open mind to explore new movement possibilities.

2) Integrative Movement Workshop: Enhancing Ballet with Yoga

Workshop Description: This workshop blends ballet and yoga to enhance dancers' physical and mental well-being through mindful movement. Beginning with breathing exercises and meditation, it sets a foundational tone of mindfulness and relaxation, creating an optimal learning and personal growth environment. This practice helps participants center themselves, let go of external distractions, and focus on the present moment. Breathing exercises, such as diaphragmatic and alternate nostril breathing, promote physiological relaxation, reducing stress and anxiety. Guided meditation further enhances this calm state, encouraging participants to observe their thoughts and sensations without judgment.

Warm-Up and Ballet Basics: After meditation, the workshop transitions to a warm-up inspired by ballet techniques to awaken muscles and improve flexibility and stability. This is followed by instruction on ballet posture, alignment, and movement vocabulary fundamentals.

Yoga Flow for Dancers: Next, the session moves into a guided yoga flow tailored for dancers, focusing on balance, strength, and fluidity. Participants will explore the similarities and differences between ballet and yoga, reflecting on how each practice complements the other. Additionally, specific yoga asanas that support ballet techniques such as pirouettes, batterie, petite allegro, and adagio will be explored, providing dancers with targeted tools to improve their performance.

Ballet-Yoga Fusion: The workshop continues with a fusion session, combining ballet movements and combinations with yoga sequences. This segment emphasizes fluid transitions, breath awareness, and mindful movement exploration.

Cool Down and Relaxation: The workshop concludes with gentle stretching, relaxation techniques, and shavasana to promote relaxation. Participants are encouraged to share reflections and express gratitude during the closing circle.

Workshop Requirements:

- Comfortable clothing suitable for movement
- Ballet slippers
- Yoga mat
- Water bottle
- An open mind to explore new movement possibilities

Ballet–Yoga Fusion

Aspect	Ballet	Yoga	Intersection
Focus Areas	Flexibility, strength, precision, and form	Flexibility, strength, mindfulness, and balance	Enhancing flexibility and strength and promoting mindfulness
Benefits	Enhances physical alignment and builds muscular precision	Increases flexibility, promotes relaxation, and improves balance	Combines physical precision with mental clarity and relaxation
Techniques	Barre exercises, pointework, leaps, and turns	Asanas (poses), pranayama (breathing exercises), and meditation	Merging movement vocabularies for holistic body–mind training
Applicable Practices	Use of ballet posture and alignments in yoga poses	Incorporation of mindfulness and breathing techniques in ballet	Tailored exercises enhancing body awareness across diverse groups

Appendix C

Integrative Movement Workshop: Ballet, Yoga, and Journaling

This Integrative Movement Workshop merges the elegance of ballet with the mindfulness of yoga, aiming to enhance dancers' physical and mental well-being through mindful movement and reflective journaling. Participants will engage in sessions that begin with breathing and meditation to create mindfulness and relaxation. The workshop includes a ballet-inspired warm-up of light stretching, plies and relieves core work, followed by guided yoga flows tailored for dancers to enhance balance, strength, and fluidity. A fusion session combining ballet and yoga emphasizes fluid transitions, breath awareness, and creative expression. Reflective journaling sessions guide participants to explore personal intentions, emotions, and experiences related to movement, deepening the connection between physical and mental experiences. Group discussions and journaling reflections build a sense of community, while gentle stretching, relaxation techniques, and guided meditation promote mental clarity and inner calm. By integrating alternative, less disciplinary yoga practices, the workshop encourages dancers to listen to their bodies and make their own decisions about movement, enhancing their awareness, authority, and overall well-being. This holistic approach contributes to the evolving field of dance research and fosters an inclusive environment for personal and community growth.

Integrative Movement Workshop: Merging Ballet and Yoga

Workshop Description: This Integrative Movement Workshop merges the elegance of ballet with the mindfulness of yoga, aiming to enhance dancers' physical and mental well-being through mindful movement and reflective journaling. Participants will engage in sessions that begin with breathing and meditation to create mindfulness and relaxation, setting the tone for the workshop.

Warm-Up: The workshop includes a ballet-inspired warm-up featuring light stretching, pliés, relevés, and core work to awaken and prepare the body.

Yoga Flow for Dancers: Following the warm-up, guided yoga flows tailored for dancers will focus on enhancing balance, strength, and fluidity.

Ballet-Yoga Fusion: A fusion session combining ballet and yoga will emphasize fluid transitions, breath awareness, and creative expression.

Reflective Journaling: Reflective journaling sessions will guide participants to explore personal intentions, emotions, and movement-related experiences, deepening the connection between physical and mental experiences.

Group Discussions: Group discussions and journaling reflections will help build community among participants.

Cool Down and Relaxation: Gentle stretching, relaxation techniques, and guided meditation will promote mental clarity and inner calm.

Encouragement of Self-Awareness: By integrating alternative, less disciplinary yoga practices, the workshop encourages dancers to listen to their bodies and make

their own decisions about movement, enhancing their awareness, authority, and overall well-being.

This holistic approach contributes to the evolving field of dance research and fosters an inclusive environment for personal and community growth.

Workshop Requirements:

- Comfortable clothing suitable for movement
- Ballet slippers
- Yoga mat
- Water bottle
- An open mind to explore new movement possibilities

Workshop #2: Movement and Mindfulness Exploration

Workshop Phase	Description
Introduction and	Overview of objectives and icebreaker activity
Ballet Basics	Warm-up and fundamentals of ballet
Yoga Flow for Dancers	Guided yoga flow for dancers with mindfulness practices
Journaling Session	Introduction to reflective journaling with guided
Ballet-Yoga Fusion	Fusion session combining ballet and yoga with creative movement
Journaling Reflection	Group discussion and sharing of insights
Cooldown and	Gentle stretching, relaxation techniques, and meditation
Closing Circle and Gratitude	Group sharing and closing remarks

Bibliography

- Akinleye, Adesola, and Rose Payne. "Transactional space: Feedback, critical thinking, and learning dance technique." *Journal of Dance Education*, vol. 16, no. 4, Oct. 2016, pp. 144–148, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15290824.2016.1165821>.
- Anderson, Jack, and Jack Anderson. *Ballet et Modern Dance: A Concise History*. Princeton Book, 1992.
- Banes, Sally. *Dancing Women: Female Bodies Onstage*. Taylor and Francis, 2013.
- Belenky, Jill. "Women's Ways of Knowing Chapter Women's Ways of Knowing On Gaining a Voice ." *College Student Development and Academic Life*, Routledge, New York, New York, 1998, pp. 89–117, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9781315051888/college-student-development-academic-life-karen-arnold-ilda-carreiro-king-philip-altbach-ilda-carreiro-king-karen-arnold?refId=a1cc4ac2-eee8-4318-aa9f-3f05706c8bd7&context=ubx>. Accessed 2024.
- Blight, James G., and Henry J. Perkinson. "Authoritarianism in western educational thought." *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 3, 1981, p. 343, <https://doi.org/10.2307/367703>.
- Currier, Danielle M. "Feminist pedagogy." *Companion to Feminist Studies*, 27 Nov. 2020, pp. 339–356, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119314967.ch19>.
- DeFrank-Cole, Lisa, and Renee K. Nicholson. "The slow-changing face of leadership in ballet: An interdisciplinary approach to analysing women's roles." *Leadership and the Humanities*, vol. 4, no. 2, Sept. 2016, pp. 73–91, <https://doi.org/10.4337/lath.2016.02.01>.
- Deikman, Arthur J. *The Wrong Way Home: Uncovering the Patterns of Cult Behavior in American Society*. Beacon Press, 1994.
- Fisher, Jennifer, and Carol Lee. "Ballet in western culture: A history of its origins and evolution." *Dance Research Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 1 Dec. 2004, p. 169, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20444604>.
- Fisher, Jennifer. "Contemporary Ballet and the Female Body Politic." *Survivor: The Ballet Edition*, XXXV, no. Network of Points, 2015, pp. 34–38.

- Foucault, Michel, et al. *Power*. Penguin Books, 2020.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012.
- “Franklin Method® - Dynamic Alignment through Imagery.” *Franklin Method® | Franklin Method, Imagery for a Happy and a Healthy Body!*, Franklin Method®, 5 Jan. 2024, franklinmethod.com/.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin Education, 1972.
- Gottschild, Brenda Dixon. *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Green, Jill. “Socially constructed bodies in American dance classrooms.” *Research in Dance Education*, vol. 2, no. 2, Dec. 2001, pp. 155–173, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14647890120100782>.
- Homans, Jennifer. *Apollo’s Angels a History of Ballet*. Granta, 2011.
- Homans, Jennifer. *Mr. B: George Balanchine’s Twentieth Century*. Granta Book, 2023.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. DEV Publishers & Distributors, 2021.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress*. Routledge, 2014.
- Jowitt, Deborah. *Time and the Dancing Image*. Univ. of California Press, 1989.
- Judith, Alter B. “Why Dance Students Pursue Dance: Studies of Dance Students from 1953 to 1993.” *Dance Research Journal*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1997, pp. 70–89. *Autumn*.
- Kirkland, Gelsey, and Greg Lawrence. *Dancing on My Grave*. DOUBLEDAY, 1986.
- Koziol, Callie. “Callie Faculty Sponsor: Darci Thoune, Department of English Studies.” *Journaling’s Impact on Mental Health*, XXIV (2021), no. UWL Journal of Undergraduate Research, 2021, pp. 1–9.
- Kruse, Stan. “The Socratic Method: Fostering Critical Thinking.” *The Institute for Learning and Teaching*, 23 Feb. 2023, tilt.colostate.edu/the-socratic-method/.

- Lakes, Robin. "The messages behind the methods: The authoritarian pedagogical legacy in western concert dance technique training and rehearsals." *Arts Education Policy Review*, vol. 106, no. 5, May 2005, pp. 3–20, <https://doi.org/10.3200/aep.106.5.3-20>.
- Mazo, Joseph H. *Dance Is a Contact Sport*. Da Capo Press, 1978.
- Press, Carol M., and Edward C. Warburton. "Creativity research in dance." *International Handbook of Research in Arts Education*, 2007, pp. 1273–1290, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-3052-9_87.
- Risner, Doug, and Susan W. Stinson. "Open access: Moving social justice in dance pedagogy: Possibilities, fears and challenges." *Dancing Mind, Minding Dance*, 2 May 2023, pp. 232–257, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003343950-27>.
- Shapiro, Sherry Badger. "Dance as activism: The power to envision, move and change." *Dance Research Aotearoa*, vol. 4, no. 1, 19 Nov. 2016, p. 3, <https://doi.org/10.15663/dra.v4i1.53>.
- Siegel, Marcia. "Review: Antony Tudor." 2009, pp. 765–772.
- Stinson, Susan W. *Embodied Curriculum Theory and Research in Arts Education: A Dance Scholar's Search for Meaning*. Springer International Publishing : Imprint : Springer, 2016.
- Uzagalis, William. *John Lock Uzgalis, William, "John Locke", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2022 Edition)*, 2022.
- Warburton, Edward C. "Beyond steps: The need for pedagogical knowledge in dance." *Journal of Dance Education*, vol. 8, no. 1, Jan. 2008, pp. 7–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15290824.2008.10387353>.
- Warburton, Edward C. "Dance pedagogy." *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance Studies*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350024489.ch-003>.
- Warburton, Edward C. "Metonymy in dance: Ballet Bunheads take a cognitive turn." *Dance Research*, vol. 37, no. 1, May 2019, pp. 18–34, <https://doi.org/10.3366/drs.2019.0251>.
- Warburton, Edward C. "Who cares? teaching and learning care in dance." *Journal of Dance Education*, vol. 4, no. 3, July 2004, pp. 88–96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15290824.2004.10387264>.

Zeller, Jessica. *Shapes of American Ballet: Teachers and Training before Balanchine*.
Oxford University Press, 2016.