

**AUDIENCE EMOTION & EXPERIENCE AS A SOURCE FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF NEW MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR
CONCERT DANCE**

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By

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Abstract

Traditional concert dance marketing strategies tend to rely exclusively on the use of abstracted body language to transmit meaning from digital and stage presentations to the eyes of viewers. These images can be highly attractive to dance audience and fellow artists who follow and relate to this genre of performance, but are typically beyond the reach and interest of most non-dance spectators. This research investigates how the study of sports and music marketing strategies, in relation to how they connect to their respective audiences, may give new insights and directions in how concert dance advertising plans can incorporate more emotional and relatable content to non-dance spectators who do not have the same sensibility and history with abstract physical language. By embracing more well-rounded and balanced approaches to promotion such as those currently being put forth by the sport and music sectors, the concert dance industry can help infuse their dance marketing efforts with a fresh jolt of personal engagement, encouraging the general public to see concert dance as a viable form of entertainment and art that can have relevance and value to their lives.

INTRODUCTION

Background

In 2014, I was awarded a residency at the prestigious Djerassi Resident Artist Program (DRAP) in Woodside, California, where selected artists gathered for one of six month-long research periods to create, work, or think on any project or idea they so desired.¹ The program's mission, one geared towards process, did not require a final creation at the end of the residency, thereby permitting the artists to explore a range of varied artistic possibilities during their time at the "ranch."² For me, my proposition was to investigate my choreographic language and to use the residency time to uncover new movement parameters and philosophies that focused more on personal inquiry than on product. I submitted this as my proposal because I felt I was in a choreographic rut and longed to find different forms, plans, and solutions to help revamp my artistic visions. After creating a new dance each semester for the past seven years at my current university job, I felt that I had run out of steam and needed to re-evaluate what my work had to say and how it was said.

By chance, one of the other artists in my residency group was South Korean-born composer and dancer Dohee Lee, who had previously worked with many famed artists including avant-garde musician Pamela Z.³, and choreographer Anna Halprin.⁴ Dohee had arrived at DRAP to work through movement and musical sketches for a performance she was to present at the Yerba Buena Performing Arts Center in San Francisco later that same year, so unlike me, she had some solid ideas to attend to during her stay. Luckily, having the language of dance in common, she and I quickly became friends, and we eventually found ourselves engaged in wonderful

philosophical talks on art and life during our lunch breaks; sitting on two old weathered wooden chairs, gazing across the Santa Cruz Mountains down to the expansive Pacific Ocean.

One day, as I was working in my studio on a hanging installation that started to emerge as a set design for a future project, I came up with a concept that required a large section of red vinyl flooring. Dohee, being a local artist based in Oakland, California, had a car available at the ranch, and kindly volunteered to drive me to a fabric store to get the supplies I needed. We took advantage of the opportunity to get off the DRAP mountain, which is pretty secluded, and ventured down a long and windy one-lane dirt road that connected the Djerassi Ranch to the small, yet bustling San Francisco suburb of Palo Alto. While visiting the town, we went to a café for lunch, stopped by the fabric store, and finally made a quick supermarket run at the local Trader Joe's. After loading up our bags into Dohee's car, preparing to head back home, we began an unintentional, yet intriguing conversation about the financial situations facing many dance artists today. Little did I know at the time, however, that this talk would eventually result in a re-focusing, or re-shifting, of personal views and approaches about what dance is; ultimately leading me to pursue a second graduate degree to initiate this research.

Our discussion, which began with a trivial remark about the need to save receipts for tax purposes, engaged us in an unexpected and thought-provoking talk about why dancers (and to a larger extent all non-commercial artists) are unable to make decent livings with just being artists.⁵ To be clear, I am not referring to being destitute or broke, but rather pointing to the fact that many dance artists need to

maintain one, if not more, non-dance jobs (waiting tables, clerks at stores, personal trainers, etc.) to cover basic living expenses (rent, bills, and food) each month. This does not take into account what is also needed to keep up with training: taking dance classes, attending workshops, having gym memberships, and seeing performances. My personal experience living and dancing in New York City involved waiting tables at two different restaurants and working as a cashier at a bookstore, all the while rehearsing and performing for multiple dance groups. It was imperative to have these non-dance jobs because they afforded me not to get paid for the many hours I spent working for small independent groups that could only offer minimal performance compensation. For three full years I lived in NYC working like this, and unfortunately, to many people I knew at the time, this was considered a typical situation: a successful working artist's life.

For those lucky enough to have full-time paid employment with dance companies, it does not necessarily mean living a life of luxury either. Former Director of Research for Dance/USA, John Munger, states, “. . . most serious dancers make less than \$25,000 a year from dancing. Many make less, and many make their primary living outside dance.”⁶ According to a 2012 New York Times interactive article on U.S. household income,⁷ an artist earning around \$35,000/year (this would include \$10k from non-dance employment) would be in the bottom 35% of income earners, which is not necessarily a very positive position to be in considering that a majority of dancers live in New York City or other expensive metropolitan areas: “. . . you can hardly call them rich, and you can't compare them to top artists in other fields -- coloratura sopranos, virtuoso violinists, [or] splashy postimpressionists.”⁸

What I infer from both these points is that, in essence, those that are deemed “successful” by others dance artists are just themselves getting by.



Now, to put all of this background information into context, I am a dancer and choreographer, composer photographer, and teacher, while Dohee is a composer, painter, choreographer, and dancer. I am from the United States, and she is from South Korea. We are both in our 40s and have been producing work for about half our lives. This conversation was not between two young, post-college dance students with no real life performance knowledge complaining that dance doesn't pay; this was a discussion between two adults, two seasoned artists, who have created art for over 20 years, have traveled and presented all over the world, have won some awards, and still struggle to “catch up” financially. I don't recall the exact ins and outs of our talk, but I do remember thinking that our unexpected conversation that day was rooted in real life experiences and histories and that we were searching for some real clarity over the economic realities that many performing artists, like ourselves, find themselves in. But before I continue, I would like to pause for a moment to mention that at this early point in questioning artist financial stability, my focus was primarily geared towards looking at why more people did not come to see concert dance shows, rather than on what other aspects contributed to this quandary. Thus the awareness of marketing potential, implementation, and power had not yet peeked my interest as a possible factor into my query.

After my initial conversation with Dohee that day in the car, I contemplated greatly over this issue during the rest of my time at the residency, trying to put my personal attachments to dance off to the side, and look at my question from different,

unbiased perspectives. One day, during a brainstorming session, I came up with a new train of thought in regards to my initial question: whether dance artists, in constantly churning out new works each year, actually ever proposed anything concrete that tackled the issue of how concert dance related and connected to the non-dance public. Many choreographers and companies can be immensely creative and produce beautiful works over and over again, but ultimately I feel that is all they do. They may use the latest technological concepts, engage in current social issues, or incorporate the newest alternative music, but the predominance of technical virtuosity over emotional involvement ultimately supersedes any power the meager offerings of marketing could have on non-dance audiences. One can currently see this in works by Sidra Bell, Joanna Kotze, Steffanie Battan Bland, Jeanine Durning, Douglas Dunn, and many other choreographers whose works showcase the body as a vehicle for *thought* rather than for *feeling*.

To be clear, in pointing these particular artists out I am not insinuating that their works are meaningless or awful; on the contrary, they have created some wonderful dances that are loved by many in the concert dance community. However, *that* is precisely the issue that has instigated this research. There may be acclaim by dance critics and audiences towards these particular artists and their works, but what about those from outside of the genre or art form? How do choreographers promote their works to non-dancers other than by just presenting their dances to them at shows and festivals? I believe that many choreographers from around the world hope that audiences simply find their way to their performances solely because of who they are and what has been said about them. Unfortunately, that mode of operation does not

always work, nor can it, when dozens of dance artists and companies are in constant competition with each other, all vying for a slice of an ever-shrinking audience population that actually likes to see concert dance.

Acknowledging this habitual, yet not fully effective audience strategy, Amy Fitterer, current Executive Director of Dance/USA points out that, “. . . dance organizations are [now becoming more] aware that just putting on a great performance isn’t enough to ensure survival.”⁹ In understanding this fact, many more companies and organizations have subsequently strengthened, created, and developed outreach programs, such as teaching dance classes or presenting lecture-demonstration performances, to connect with potential audience members, thereby helping build their communities through the language of dance. But while these elements are needed and essential in fostering awareness for the art form, according to a 2012 National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) report,¹⁰ attendance at non-ballet dance performances (concert dance being part of this diverse group) has declined from 6.3% in 2002 to 5.6% in 2012. So even though more dance organizations are investing time and money towards improving their community ties, why is dance, more specifically concert dance, still struggling to attract audiences?

Television shows such as *So You Think You Can Dance (SYTYCD)*, and *Dancing With the Stars (DWTS)* have no doubt increased the visibility of dance to millions of people around the globe, but shows like these and others alike only promote dance as a type of digestible entertainment, solely filled with physical tricks, wide-grin smiles, and over-the-top melodrama to engage audiences. By emphasizing competition over artistry (and yes, I know there will be those who will argue this

point), these shows have actually widened the gap in today's public perception of what is considered "acceptable" dance and what is "the other." Those of us who work within the concert dance field may cringe at the frivolity of these shows, but we *must* acknowledge that they have created a type of performance experience that resonates with the public; and unlike that which currently exists within the concert dance format, these programs actually draw passionate viewers in by the thousands.¹¹ Even though SYTYCD & DWTS are slanted more towards the entertainment slice of dance, I do believe that there is something more to uncover and learn by analyzing how these types of shows create relationships with the viewing public. Therefore, in coming to the understanding that audiences *can* and *will* support dance, albeit an entertainment-based style, I decided to look at my initial inquiry from a new perspective, and shifted it from the relationship of audience to dance, to one of dance to audience. In doing so, I re-formulated my question: What was concert dance doing that disconnected it from would-be audiences?



In asking this question, I decided that I needed to base my analysis in relation to other cultural public events that would contrast the feel and look of concert dance, yet, still relate to it through the need of having an audience. Therefore, for this research I elected to focus on two very large components of cultural entertainment: sports games and pop music concerts, and examine them from practical observation lenses (attending concerts and watching of commercials) to shed some light on possible reasons why people seek out and attend these gatherings more than dance performances. However, in selecting these two industries, I quickly become mindful of the fact that analyzing sports games and music concerts in relation to the whole

spectrum of concert dance would be a daunting task that would take far more time and effort than what I was currently allotted for this research. Therefore, with this in mind, I narrowed my scope and directed my attention on just one aspect of these events that would link directly to my initial query to the financial well-being of concert dance artists: the use of marketing in relation to the audience experience.

The reasons for choosing to research marketing, specifically the online kind that is concerned with the creation, production, and distribution of promotional videos and images for the web, came about due to the fact that it is a highly effective tool in reaching audiences; it is easy to use; and because the study of it can potentially lead to inroads in addressing the financial weaknesses and insecurities that many feel exist within concert dance. According to a 2015 Forbes article written by contributor John Rampton, “Online video is undoubtedly changing the way audiences engage with content, ads, and brands, and small businesses and enterprises alike are starting to take advantage.”¹² Furthermore, the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB)¹³ reported that revenue from online campaigns is continuing to rise, showing that, “. . . 2015 full year internet advertising revenues totaled \$59.6 billion, up 20.4% from the \$49.5 billion reported in 2014.”¹⁴ Needless to say, understanding more about current online advertising successes and failures might prove to be very beneficial to all those involved in creating and developing marketing schemes for concert dance.



Many dance artists and organizations currently use the online advertising platform for a variety of reasons: self-promotion (produced either by the individual artist/company or an outsourced entity); to promote performances or tours; and to introduce and showcase the choreographic, technical and artistic abilities of regional,

national, and international companies and choreographers. Also, artists (especially the self-producing ones without large marketing teams or budgets) know that this relatively free online presence is crucial in order to be seen, noticed, and hopefully booked by presenters, producers, and funding organizations worldwide.¹⁵ In his article, *Planet Selfie*, writer Jim Edwards, states that on any given day, “. . . 1.8 billion images [are uploaded] to Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, Snapchat, and WhatsApp . . . That is the rough equivalent of one photo for every person on the planet — including billions of people in the developing world who have no access to technology — in less than a week.”¹⁶ While a large percentage of this staggering number is in no doubt due to society’s obsession with “selfies,” I would also suggest that both dance videos and photos (ranging from the novice and low-budget entries to the well conceived and produced) undoubtedly contribute to that large, and ever-growing number.

In most instances, dance fans are the ones who view these short and disposable “ads,” occasionally adding their “likes” to them, and possibly sharing them with their many online friends. However, the likelihood that non-dancer eyes (someone with little to no ties to a dance friend or the dance field) will ever view these videos and images on their own is not so considerable. The issue to understand here is not that the movements or photographic images are bad per se (although for some that is the case); it is that the actual content, the product presented within them, is of no tangible interest to those outside of the dance world; and *this* is a major hurdle concert dance must address if it wants to move away from the periphery of the arts world and more towards visible mainstream culture. Therefore, through this investigation on dance

marketing, my research will point to important factors that argue why promotion that is solely based on abstract physical movement with no direct relation to the viewer, which is what concert dance traditionally does, will fail in producing an active, engaging effect with the non-dance spectator that could otherwise contribute to the support and enjoyment of choreographic works. Videos and photos are fast, visible, and effective forms of advertising and PR, but if they can't connect to a larger segment of viewers beyond dance families, friends, and loved ones, how effective are they?



In mulling over the three different cultural events (sports, music, and dance) planned for my research; going over the similarities and differences between their marketing strategies, I realized that I kept coming back to two main ideas that have since become the backbone of my research: *engagement* and *experience*. Both concepts, simple but significant aspects of how we relate to things in our lives, were facts that personally, I never really paid much attention to while choreographing and presenting my own works; at least not on a conscious level. I created what I felt instinctually, letting the work speak for itself, thereby allowing the audience to interpret the dance as they wished. This is how I was trained in school, and I never questioned its validity or purpose, *until now*. Through my investigation of the links between cultural events and audience, I have become acutely aware how engagement and experience are at the core of how people, *how we*, relate to all presentations, be it film, a music concert, or a sports game; and that if concert dance indeed longs to find a stronger foothold with its relation to the public, both in marketing and live performance, then these two attributes need to be actively addressed by those who

create and present them.

But why would experience and engagement through marketing schemes be important to understand and develop in the quest to connect with audiences, and in turn, aid the livelihood of dancers? Because experience is tied to emotion, and emotion is a critical motivator of behavior that contributes to engagement, suggests Judith Lynne Hanna, writer, dance critic, and Research Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Maryland. In her book *The Performer-Audience Connection: Emotion to Metaphor in Dance and Society*, Hanna states: “Through movement, emotions announce themselves inside our bodies; hearts pound, backs stiffen, stomachs churn, hands tremble, and faces blush. Because emotions and their movements convey meanings that influence special and everyday activities, we traffic in clues to distinguish different emotions.”¹⁷ To me, what is inferred by her quote is that experience, in conjunction with emotional connectivity, produces an encounter (engagement) that is then gauged as good or bad, and which helps one decide what they like, support, or seek out. American research psychologist Carroll Izard observes, “Emotion . . . can influence perception and cognition.”¹⁸ If we look at this in terms of basic marketing analysis: good experiences and engagements via successfully employed advertising will sell products; bad ones don’t. Which one of these experiences does the non-dance public believe they receive from concert dance?



The core of my research is focused on information from prominent figures such as philosopher Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, scholar Monsieur Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt, choreographer and scholar Susan Leigh Foster, and dance critic John Martin, to name a few. Each has directed me towards the viewpoint of how lack of

familiarity and knowledge of dance language has become one of the biggest barriers for choreographers in trying to reach a wider non-dance populace. Their standpoints also allow me to suggest that concert dance marketing designers move away from a quintessentially abstract point of view to one more inclusive of emotionally related material and perspectives that can match the intent and impact of sport and music advertisement.

But how does one gain an experience of dance through advertising? To create a pool of would-be live concert dance performance spectators, many choreographers and arts organizations have turned to digital advertising in promoting their choreographic works, hoping to entice viewers to come see their live shows. Typically these are short excerpts of dances, some highlighting the technical virtuosity of the dancers, while others concentrate on performance theme, specific highlights or moments of the advertised project. The wonderful part of these videos is that they provide great resources for aspiring and newly professional dancers in investigating and studying those artists they admire; want to take a class or workshops with; or attend a performance by. They also serve to introduce dance audiences to what a particular choreographer is creating or researching, showing whether they are new and cutting edge, or unfortunately, stuck in the past. However, in a majority of the cases, the tendency of these marketing campaigns is to treat the videos as extensions of the live performance, meaning that what they retain their inherent abstractedness, offering little concrete substance such as character connectivity, kinetic empathy, or visual stimulation to engage the non-dance viewer.

In contrast, the sport and music industries practice an approach to effective

marketing that successfully attracts a consumer to a promoted product, cultivates them to buy, and ultimately, encourages them to go back for more through the use of emotional engagement within its developed advertising systems. Morris B. Holbrook, professor of marketing at Columbia Business School in New York, whose work focuses on the importance of emotions in consumption, states in his 1984 article *The Role of Emotion in Advertising*, “. . . emotion should be manipulated and studied because it helps to explain incremental variance in purchasing behavior.”¹⁹ He lists a few examples of how this “feeling-based” type of marketing has been implemented in regular product commercials in the past, one being the famous “Mean Joe Greene” Coke television spot produced in 1979.²⁰ In this ad, Pittsburgh Steelers defensive tackle Charles Edward Greene (aka “Mean” Joe Greene) plays himself, limping down a hallway, as a young boy, a fan, offers him his Coke: “The refreshing Coke prompts a smile from the intimidating Steeler and he tosses the boy his game jersey [with the now-famous punchline, “Hey Kid, Catch!].”²¹ The commercial, which was part of the “Have a Coke and a Smile” ad campaign, has been copied multiple times throughout the past decades and even earned the McCann-Erickson ad agency a Clio Award for being one of the best television commercials of 1979.²²

What is important to note with this Coke commercial, along with others in the series, is that it proved that consumers could connect to advertising through a process called *transportation*: a system of marketing that permits the viewer to connect to the ad/product via, “. . . devices like character identification, empathizing, and narrative flow, which target deep-seated beliefs towards the featured brand or promoted behavior.”²³ This, I believe, is a method that concert dance could implement in re-

thinking the designs of their traditional marketing formats. The Coke commercial, and others like it, connected to the viewer through the packaging of known and felt emotions, affirming research that indicated that any marketing strategy developed and executed would become rendered ineffective, “. . . unless it considers how the brand or product fits into the emotion-laden experience of consumption.”²⁴ How many times have choreographers and presenters thought about this when creating their marketing plans? I know *I* never have.



The sport and music industries are highly attuned and skilled at creating successful marketing campaigns that not only show off their respective artists or athletes, but do so in a way that relates directly to the viewer in personal and effective manners. By examining tactics the sport and music industries use in conventional advertising, this research will provide information and perspectives through direct, viewer-centered lenses, which I believe are crucial in understanding how to create stronger dance marketing campaigns that will not only attract viewers and audiences to online information but hopefully to live performances as well. In the first chapter, *An Experience with Conceptual Dance*, I discuss a Toronto Dance Theatre performance I attended in 2016 as an example of how the use of conceptual body mechanic choreography (inspired by the work of Judson Dance Theater) has actually alienated audiences through the display of technical skill and proficiency over emotional content and connection. The next chapters: *Gesture and Emotion As Language*, *A Look At The Marketing Of Concert Dance*, and *The Power of Sports and Music Marketing Strategies*, discuss my theories as to why concert dance, which identifies itself based on the premise of gesture and conceptual ideologies, faces

challenges in engaging viewers with its traditional forms of non-appealing marketing. These ideas are laid out to give the reader a stronger grasp as to why the intrinsic nature of concert dance does not entice more audiences to its performances; how societal, personal, and artistic factors create barriers between the artwork and the spectator; what tactics are currently used to market concert dance; and finally, why traditional forms of dance advertising fail in creating compelling and successful connections to attract and engage viewers. Finally, in the last chapter, *Concert Dance in Media and Re-Designs* I highlight a few marketing strategies that are currently turning the tables on the traditional formats of advertising and are succeeding in nurturing a richer and more satisfying experience for viewers; enabling the better organized, designed, and engaging material to reach new audiences that may have never attended a dance performance before.

Closing

With all this in mind, I do want to make it clear that the purpose of this research is not to create a mandate that restricts creativity and exploration for artists, but rather, to encourage dialogue, analysis, and debate on how the incorporation of audience experience within the implementation of online dance marketing schemes can create more understanding of gesture and movement, thereby allowing concert dance to develop a stronger presence within the public community. If we as dance artists want to cultivate audiences, increase show attendance, and thus help both dance artists make more of a living wage, then we need to understand that these factors will only come to light if audiences can have better engaging experiences with concert dance performances, both on stage *and* in marketing.

 NOTES

¹ 823 artists applied for only 90 residency slots.

² The main building and land for the Djerassi residency program used to be for raising cattle.

³ Pamela Z is an American composer, performer, and media artist who is best known for her solo works for voice with electronic processing. She began touring her work nationally and internationally and, by the year 2000, she was performing regularly in New York, Europe, and Japan. Z has performed in such festivals as Bang on a Can at Lincoln Center in New York, the Interlink Festival in Japan, Other Minds in San Francisco, La Biennale di Venezia in Venice, Italy, and Pina Bausch Tanztheater's Festival in Wuppertal, Germany. (Wikipedia)

⁴ Anna Halprin is a pioneer of the experimental art form known as postmodern dance. She, along with her contemporaries such as Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer, John Cage, and Robert Morris, collaborated and built a community based on the fundamentals of post-modern dance. (Wikipedia)

⁵ For clarity, in this study, dance or dancers is in reference to concert dance: an idea of dance that is traditionally performed for an audience in a theater setting, though this is not a requirement, and is usually choreographed and performed to set music.

⁶ Lightsey Darst, "The Poorest Art: Dance and Money (I)," *The Huffington Post*, August 1, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lightsey-darst/dancer-income-wages-lifestyle-_b_1556794.html.

⁷ Jeremy White, Robert Gebelopp, Ford Fessenden, "What Percent Are You?" *New York Times*, January 14, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/01/15/business/one-percent-map.html?_r=0.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Karyn D. Collins, "Dancing Lessons: How Engaging Dance Audiences Is Educating the Field," *Dancers Group*, May 1, 2014, <http://dancersgroup.org/2014/05/dancing-lessons-how-engaging-dance-audiences-is-educating-the-field/>.

¹⁰ Brian Weiss, "NEA Report: Arts Audiences Grow More Diverse Amid Declines," *WQXR Blog*, September 26, 2013, <http://www.wqxr.org/#!/story/nea-report-arts-audiences-grow-more-diverse/>.

¹¹ SYTYCD averages 5 million viewers per season, while DWTS averages about 15 million. (Wikipedia)

¹² John Rampton, "How Video Marketing Is Changing Online," *Forbes-Tech*, April 17, 2015, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/johnrampton/2015/04/17/how-video-marketing-is-changingonline/#1b70f0cd475d>.

¹³ IAB is an advertising business organization that develops industry standards, conducts research, and provides legal support for the online advertising industry.

¹⁴ "IAB internet advertising revenue report – 2015 full year results," *IAB*, accessed June 4, 2015, <http://www.iab.com/insights/iab-internet-advertising-revenue-report-conducted-bypricewaterhousecoopers-pwc-2/>.

¹⁵ Not all web sharing is free, but a large percentage of self-produced artists do take advantage of promoting in this way. Larger organizations, those with marketing budgets, do pay for certain services that allow them to have a more prominent online presence.

¹⁶ Jim Edwards, “PLANET SELFIE: We’re Now Posting A Staggering 1.8 Billion Photos Every Day,” *Business Insider-Tech*, May 28, 2014, <http://www.businessinsider.com/were-now-posting-astaggering-18-billion-photos-to-social-media-every-day-2014-5>.

¹⁷ Judith Lynne Hanna, *The Performer-Audience Connection: Emotion to Metaphor in Dance and Society*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 6.

¹⁹ Morris B. Holbrook, John O’Shaughnessy, “The Role of Emotion in Advertising,” *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 1 No 2 p. 2 (1984): 46.

²⁰ Stiggerpao, “Coca-Cola Classic ad: Mean Joe Green [Full Version] (1979)”, video, 1:02, July 17, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xffOCZYX6F8>.

²¹ “Hey Kid, Catch!,” *Wikipedia*, accessed May 30, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hey_Kid,_Catch!

²² *Ibid.*

²³ “The Transportation of “Mean” Joe Greene: A good tell is a good sell,” *Gandrllc.com*, August 7, 2012, <http://www.gandrllc.com/on-our-minds/the-transportation-of-mean-joe-greene-a-good-tell-is-agood-sell/>.

²⁴ Holbrook, “The Role of Emotion in Advertising,” 46.

Chapter One
AN EXPERIENCE WITH CONCEPTUAL DANCE

All great visual art requires skill, but not all skilled art is great.¹

Eric Wayne

Without delving too deeply into the history of postmodern dance, it is important to at least recognize the impact of the Judson Dance Theater (JDT) on the existence of concert dance today. The work of JDT is for many postmodern choreographers like Terry O'Connor, Jérôme Bel, John Jaspers, Joanna Kotze, Jeanine Durning, Ralph Lemon, and countless others, the backbone of their work, the reason they can explore organic concepts on movement language and theme, and test the boundaries of performance space. With their early investigations in rejecting the prevailing aesthetics of dance practice and theory, avant-garde experimentalists such as Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, David Gordon, Deborah Hay, Meredith Monk, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, Elaine Summers, and others, used movement devices, “. . . from Mr. [Robert] Dunn's workshop, Merce Cunningham and Anna Halprin, the innovative and influential San Francisco choreographer, and, most importantly, their own creative hunches,”² to help problem solve, explore new types of movement concepts, and take self-expression out of the choreographic mix.

Dance historian, writer, and critic, Sally Banes, states in her essay *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theatre and Its Legacy*: “Many of the Judson choreographers were critical of the older modern dance because of its excessive psychologism, its emotional dramas, its social literalism.”³ Authors Charmaine Patricia Warren and Suzanne Youngerman in their joint essay, *I See America*

Dancing, also comment about these explorations: “They [JDT] questioned whether performers had to be trained dancers and often used non-dancers and everyday movement in their pieces. They performed in unconventional spaces and often blurred the boundaries between performers and audiences.”⁴ Judson Dance Theater followed many of Merce Cunningham’s (one of the most influential choreographers of the 20th century) creative aesthetics and philosophies in the development of their dance works, which Sally Banes describes in her book, *Terpsichore in Sneakers*:

“1) Any movement can be material for dance; 2) any procedure can be a valid compositional method; 3) any part or parts of the body can be used (subject to nature’s limitations); 4) music, costume, décor, lighting, and dancing have their own separate logics and identities; 5) any dancer in the company might be a soloist; 6) any space might be danced in; 7) dancing can be about anything, but is fundamentally and primarily about the human body and its movements, beginning with walking.”⁵

In looking at what is currently being produced and shown at performances throughout the country and abroad, it is evident how Cunningham’s elements have engrained themselves well within the world of concert dance. Postmodern choreographers have embraced many of his theories into their own compositions, giving the whole of concert dance a seed from where each artist has grown from. While the majority of Cunningham’s ideas are found in other forms of visual art, it is the last claim, number seven, which is firmly rooted in dance, and raises questions for me about how concert dance relates to audiences.



In March 2016, I traveled to Toronto, Canada, to attend a dance performance billed as the *New York/Toronto Project* presented by Toronto’s main contemporary dance company, Toronto Dance Theatre. Below are program notes from each of the

choreographers, giving us, the audience, a glimpse into what we were about to see:

Un Petit Peu Plus was created through daily investigations of the person, the body and space in relationship to time, other bodies and the viewer. This new work, created specifically for and with the dancers of Toronto Dance Theatre allows human uniqueness and physical potential to clash, collide and fuse with the architecture of form and space, constructing a personal and visual experience for both viewer and performer.

This Shape, We are In - My proposition in dance is toward a more pliable sense of self, questioning and redefining how we exist within structures of “knowing,” “rationality,” and “reason.” I am interested in how our internal structures of thinking are directly tied to how we move through and relate to the world. My work explores questions of who we are, the nature of perception and relation, and the slippery terrain of invented narratives of self and other. My interest in dance is that it has the capability of destabilizing our fixed notions of who we are, and therefore it’s been important for me to devise choreographic structures that destabilize the performer’s fixed notions of what they/we are doing. I accept the challenge of live performance as something that reveals an aspect of humanity and togetherness that is vulnerable and precarious, and I try to create environments in which the audience is made complicit in this experience.

The first description is from Joanna Kotze who is originally from South Africa. She is well embedded within the New York City dance scene, having worked with choreographers Wally Cardona, Kimberly Bartosik, Netta Yerushalmy, and Sam Kim, among others. Jeanine Durning, the choreographer of the second work, is from New York and has collaborated with diverse artists including Susan Rethorst, David Dorfman, Lance Gries, Chris Yon, Zvi Gotheiner, Martha Clarke, Richard Siegal, and Bebe Miller. According to the program notes above, both choreographers found inspiration in exposing the physicality and potentials of the body in unique ways, leading Artistic Director of Toronto Dance Theatre (TDT), Christopher House, to say

that Durning and Kotze are, “. . . artists that capture the essence of New York [dance] today. With their post-modern lineage and infectious curiosity about what dance might be they are ideal guests [for TDT].”⁶ Durning’s statement on her personal website reinforces this thinking: “At its foundation [my choreography] is a rigorous research of the body: what it does, what it is capable of doing, what we perceive it is, how it interacts with other bodies, how it holds and conveys multiple meanings, and how it directly [affects] social, political and cultural landscapes.”⁷ With her description in mind, I ask this question: How is one able to have an experience with dance that is conceptual in nature, and is concerned solely with the notion of body mechanics?

The premise of the two TDT choreographies revolved around the concepts of accomplishing physical scores through movement invention and thematic propositions. The dancers, for their part, existed in a world of complete abstraction, removed from any definitive form of narrative or logical thought. Both works had the same tone, feel and theme: five dancers, each dressed in nonspecific outfits, walking, running, and meandering in and out of the performance space, haphazardly making physical connections with each other that resembled structured improvisational scores, group flocking, and moments of either looking at the audience or coming into close proximity to them. The dancers appeared self-indulgent, internal, and obtuse, yet, at selected times, I will admit they were somewhat captivating and funny as when they would find a random object in the space and hold it while adlibbing a nonsensical story for a few minutes. The two works were so similar in feel and design that without the aid of the program notes, I believe it would have been almost

impossible to know that the same choreographer did not create them. If there had been no intermission in between, the two dances could have been one longer piece, and no one would have been the wiser.

This performance, these works, also support a theory I have, which is that many current concert dance works appear geared for audiences that understand, are invested in, and support this particular style of postmodern art. Being a dancer and choreographer myself, I could find things to relate to regarding technique or visual elements, taking notes on how they crafted their physical designs for their presentations. But personally, the works but did not invoke in me a sense of continual active emotional engagement. The construction and presentation made me feel as if I were not “invited to the party;” that I had “missed the memo” on what was going to happen. I was being forced to think too much about what was going on as opposed to just being able to invest and appreciate the works at hand: not that you can’t think and enjoy at the same time. However, my particular reaction to this performance is not just directed at Kotze’s and Durning’s works but to a larger philosophical approach of concert dance that abstracts and pushes the confines of what dance is, suggesting a “democratizing” of the art form for participants and viewers, but actually alienates them instead.

While concert dancers do train to accomplish the demanded choreographic tasks, the manners in which some works are presented these days does bring that reality into question: if anyone can be a dancer, then how can audiences look at concert dance and call it art? What separates it from street dance or other forms of social dancing? There is an issue here as dance critic, Deborah Jowitt, points out in

her book *Time and the Dancing Image*: “Paradox: making art more like life doesn’t necessarily make it more accessible or more popular. In fact, the reverse is likely to be true.”⁸ She continues, “. . . [the] viewer . . . believes he/she’s being cheated unless the dancers are doing something certifiably difficult: ‘Call that dance?’”⁹ This ambiguity of perception is what some choreographers, dancers, and spectators love about concert dance, yet, it is also what most non-dance audiences loathe and retreat from; and I have no doubt that the Toronto Dance Theatre performance that night would have left many non-dance people scratching their heads in wonderment about what they had just witnessed.



The TDT audience seemed filled with dancer goers, friends of the performers or other people connected to the dance community in one capacity or another. At the end, I was taken aback, actually confused for a few minutes, by the large and vocal applause the company received, until I started to overhear a gentleman and two of his friends behind me speak about what they just saw compared to the choreographic language of Pina Bausch. Since I was in the middle of my research and a huge fan of Bausch, I decided to sit and listen for a few minutes, hoping to pick up any kernels of insight from their exchange that I could use for my writing. The three (one woman and two men) talked about how much they enjoyed Bausch’s work, finding it human and relatable compared to the present array of analytical and conceptual works, specifically pointing towards Kotze’s and Durning’s works. They philosophized over what makes dance accessible, enjoyable, and entertaining, honing in on the critical component of relatability and empathy. They spoke like this for a few minutes, until one of the friends asked if the older gentleman, who apparently lives in Europe, could

be sure to tell her when Bausch's work, *1980*, would be performed again in London, as she would make sure to travel overseas to see it. It was amazing to hear that this woman would be willing to fly across the Atlantic to see a company and their work that, for reasons only known to her, connected to her in such a way that she would travel a great distance to experience it again. I am sure I have never come across that at other dance shows. Her comment made me smile and let me know that my reaction to what I had just seen, and my instincts about researching emotion in relation to concert dance, were headed in the right direction.

If concert dance were simply about watching dancers do movement tasks or tricks, then that would be one thing, and we could file it under the auspicious of modern conceptual art, athletics, or circus, and market it in that respect. But the very fact that concert dance choreographers work with real human bodies to present works that deal with many societal, emotional, and political issues, makes it even more challenging (not all the time) for audiences to extract tangible human identities and relationships when what is presented to them on stage does not make those bodies relatable beings to them. An inanimate object can be subjected to being looked upon and being called a thing, *abstract*; but a body, an actual person who breathes and eats and lives, cannot be abstracted: it is a person, and will always be a person. This idea may be common knowledge; yet, I do believe that choreographers, both in live performance and in marketing, seem to forget this important vital fact.



Before our ever-changing, fickle, and ego-centric modern times, dance was perceived quite differently in early societies: “The dancing of the Greeks as well as of the Romans had very little in common with the exercise which goes by that name in

modern times. It [was] divided into two kinds, gymnastic and mimetic.”¹⁰ What this suggests is that the form of dance presented ages ago was intended either to represent sophisticated bodily activity, such as acrobatic or circus skills, or to imitate behaviors found in nature, particularly that of animals. In either case, the dancing presented was linked to religious rites, worshipping and celebrating the gods, which eventually developed into what became known as Apollonian and Dionysian dances.¹¹

During these historical periods, pantomimes, singers, actors, and dancers performed in large amphitheaters at events that were witnessed by thousands of engaging spectators eager to partake in the communal celebrations. However, today, things have changed quite drastically with dance and drama becoming secular, separated from religious ties, and now usually presented in smaller proscenium-style theaters that only seat hundreds or even less silent, passive, and polite spectators. In fact, I believe the Toronto Dance Theatre space held only around 100 seats for its performances: an average size for concert dance shows. The shift in acceptance, participation, and support of dance is due to many factors, but one that falls in line with my research is how dance is seen and valued in our society.

During the Greek and Roman Empires, dance was part of their cultures, and ordinary citizens used it as a way of giving thanks to their gods for the blessings and opportunities they had in their lives. In the early 20th-century, outside the upper-class arts circles that were privileged to see early modern art performances, the typical American had little knowledge of the advances that were emerging in dance. For most people, dance consisted of racist minstrel shows or vaudevillian performances with tawdry spectacles of voluptuous women showing leg with little to no (what we would

consider today) technique: essentially low brow entertainment. There was little interest from the public in seeing what dance could be or say; and part of that rejection towards dance was the fact that the United States was founded on Puritanical ideals, which for the most part, considered any type of dancing immoral. Unlike the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, the intellectuals and the burgeoning middle class of the 18th and 19th centuries considered the appreciation of art as a, “. . . decadent aristocratic political system”¹² that was associated with, “. . . luxury and hedonistic tastes;”¹³ things that any moral American person would shy away from if they knew any better.

Today, even though U.S. society has evolved and overcome many of the ideals the Puritans held dear, the views on dance still challenge many people of all ages, religion, economic status, gender, and race. As such, at this point, we must now direct our attention to why the perception and understanding of abstract gesture and movement is complicated not only by personal ideals, upbringings, and different life experiences that have shaped and instilled in many of us individual points of view about what dance *is* and *should be*, but by the lack of awareness by choreographers and presenters about how abstracted physical dance language, void of emotional connectivity, can become irrelevant and uninteresting to prospective viewers with no previous shared movement experience.

NOTES

¹ Eric Wayne, “Why People Hate Conceptual Art, Part 2,” *Art of Eric Wayne*, January 13, 2015, <http://artofericwayne.com/2015/01/13/the-debate-over-skill-in-visual-art-and-conceptual-art/>.

² Jack Anderson, “How The Judson Theater Changed American Dance,” *New York Times*, January 31, 1982, <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/01/31/arts/how-the-judson-theater-changed-american-dance.html?pagewanted=all>.

³ Sally Banes, "Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theatre and Its Legacy," *Performing Arts Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, American Theatre: Fission/Fusion (1981): 106.

⁴ Charmaine Patricia Warren with Suzanne Youngerman, "I See America Dancing: A History of American Modern Dance," *Dance Motion USA: Media*, accessed February 16, 2016, P. 8, http://www.dancemotionusa.org/media/6681/dancemotion_2010_dancehistory_essay.pdf.

⁵ Sally Banes, "*Terpsichore in Sneakers – Post-Modern Dance*," (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1987): 6.

⁶ Christopher House, "Message from the Artistic Director," New York/Toronto Project Program Notes, February 20, 2016.

⁷ "About," *Jeaninedurning.com*, accessed March 29, 2016, http://www.jeaninedurning.com/?page_id=50.

⁸ Deborah Jowitt, *Time and the Dancing Image*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988): 324.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ William Smith, "Saltatio," *UChicago.edu*, accessed on February 12, 2015, http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/secondary/SMIGRA*/Saltatio.html.

¹¹ Apollonian dances were more ceremonial and performed during religious festivals, weddings, communal events, and funerals, while the Dionysian or Bacchanalian dance revolved around passion and desire. Liturgical dances could be seen as a current day example of these religious Greek and Roman dances.

¹² Nancy Reynolds, Malcolm McCormick, "*No Fixed Points*," (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003): 3.

¹³ Ibid.

Chapter Two

GESTURE & EMOTION AS LANGUAGE

There is an action of witnessing that I hope to stimulate the audience to engage in, and they may not all 'witness' the same thing.¹

Adesola Akinleye

In 1997, modern dancer, choreographer, and Anthropology and Women's Studies Professor, Jane Desmond, wrote in her compilation of dance essays *Meaning in Motion*, “When movement is codified as ‘dance’, it may be learned informally in the home or community... or studied in special schools for social dance . . . [or] for theatrical dance forms.”² I would also add that for movement to be considered “dance” it has to have the intent of actually being “performed.” This is not to say that dance can only take place in theatrical environments; instead, it is to suggest that those who are doing it acknowledge that they are indeed *dancing*, either for themselves or others, and not just arbitrarily moving around.

Knowing this, we can then say that dance is broadly thought of as movement and gesture organized together into structure and design, encompassing time, space and body, to convey meaning through physical and sometimes theatrical means. It can be viewed as cultural, folk, social, entertainment, musical, liturgical, improvisational, abstract, dance theater or postmodern, among others. Also, in whatever style it takes, there is some intent surrounding it, be it to form community, to worship, to philosophize, to entertain, to share histories, to express emotions, or to give visualizations on aspirations, struggles, and triumphs. In all cases, there is a sharing of information that happens when the *performing* body moves and is viewed by others; and that identification of meaning is based on many factors that the viewer

brings to the “performance.”

As a modern dance choreographer, my job centers on creating new worlds on stage, putting forth my vision (my art) of how I perceive the world to be, which sometimes includes presenting parts of my personal history to be viewed, reviewed, and discussed. As such, within each creation, I can choose the works to be literal, abstract, musical, or experimental; whatever I deem fit for that particular idea. But beyond the purely visual aspect of the dances, of presenting bodies moving in whatever format I choose to encapsulate them in, how do I, and as I propose in this thesis, *we* as dance artists, really connect to those who see our creative works either on stage or in digital form? How do *we* connect to those who view concert dance as something strange and “not for them”? How do *we* encourage audiences to enjoy the works and find their own meanings? How do *we* make concert dance a viable form of expression and storytelling that the average person can appreciate and understand on the same level as other cultural forms?

In tackling these large theoretical and societal questions I have asked myself; and also to begin chipping away at my initial inquiry regarding the financial conditions of concert dancers, I realized that I had to acknowledge some important philosophical theories on gesture, empathy, language, and perception in order to understand how dance marketing (and to an extent, live performance) can be re-imagined and re-examined to help attract more interest and support from the general public. Therefore, to continue this line of research, I start with an essay from choreographer and dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster titled, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*, where she introduces the idea of kinetic

empathy, and the important figure of Étienne Bonnot de Condillac.

Experience & Kinesthetic Empathy

Written in 2005, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* focuses on the idea of “kinetic empathy” in relation to bodily experience in early 18th century France. In her abstract, Foster states, “It [the essay] examines the conditions under which one body could claim to know what another body was feeling, using two sets of documents – philosophical examinations of perception and kinesthesia by Condillac and notations of dances published by Feuillet.”³ For purposes of this research, however, I will only focus on her analysis concerning Condillac, as he provides vital information for my continued discussion on re-evaluating current dance marketing strategies.

Within her essay, Foster presents the reader with French philosopher and epistemologist, Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, also known as Abbé de Condillac. Born on September 30, 1714, in Grenoble, France, Condillac was the leading advocator of *sensationism*: a branch of empiricism that debates the role of experience within the development of our cognitive abilities, rejecting the philosophy that the mind can make judgments upon things or actions it is not yet aware of. Condillac’s theories on sensationism were deeply influenced by English philosopher and physician John Locke’s claim that knowledge came from experience: *empiricism*.⁴ Locke did not believe that humans were born with pre-imprinted ideas or knowledge, rather, that they learned how to maneuver, interact, and exist in the world through physical and mental experiences. Locke stated: “It seems to me a near contradiction to say that there are truths imprinted on the soul, which it perceives or understands not.”⁵ Locke

argued that if we, as a species, were not *all* acutely aware of our instinctual actions, nor able to perceive that we had them in the first place, could we really say that there existed inherent human actions, as can be said to exist in the animal kingdom?

For Condillac, following the theories of Locke brought his own research to defining consciousness specifically through the experience of touch. However, while Locke's own theories on perception revolved upon the proposition of rejecting notions of inherent, inborn principles and instinctive ideas within the human being, Condillac went a step further and rejected the possibility of innate *abilities* as well. Condillac's two major philosophical works, *Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines* (*Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*) in 1746, and the *Traité des Sensations* (*Treatise on Sensations*) in 1754, were significant developments of his theory on kinesthesia, asserting that human experience and learning could only truly come from the senses: sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch; and that these experiences, “. . . not only provided us with ‘ideas’ or the raw materials for knowledge, [they] also [taught] us how to focus attention, remember, imagine, abstract, judge, and reason. It forms our desires and teaches us what to will.”⁶

To illustrate his theory, Condillac offered the image of a statue, an inanimate body frozen in marble, which becomes aware of its existence by awakening and utilizing each one of its senses one by one, only then realizing that it is a body; a body that can move and feel: “The body that exists in space and can be extended through space then assists in the production of knowledge as a sequence of incremental, contiguous units, acquired through the action of moving and then registering the results.”⁷ Sensing the body, both through initiating touch and receiving touch, the

statue (and in a larger sense, *us*) begins to catalogue self-awareness and consciousness into a relationship with the environment: touch transmits meaning, and through meaning it creates relationships; and through those relationships, it begins to create gestures: the first language.

But why would research on Condillac's theories on touch and awareness be important to know about in the quest for new marketing plans for dance? I believe that by examining Condillac's theories a bit closer, we can begin to piece together a theoretical foundation that allows us to gain insights in how people respond to movement, which is what dance deals with. In *Traité des Sensations*, Condillac argued that gesture, as a pre-physical manifestation of language, is connected to our needs (I reach for something I want - I push away something I do not want), and that actual physical touch (not visual perception as John Locke had reasoned in his own theories) provided the most accurate information in bringing the physical world into our consciousness. We all have experienced touch, either through initiating or receiving, and these tactile experiences have enabled us to grow and develop; to become active observers in making decisions about what is happening around us; to create; to interact with our surroundings; and to connect with other people. These actions of being physical are tantamount to deeper learning and awareness, more than just the "inaction" of thinking about it. How many times have we heard the expression "Don't just think it, do it"? Since the objective of this thesis is concerned with improving concert dance marketing campaigns, it becomes important to ask: Has the greater non-dance public done or experienced the kind of touch presented within concert dance marketing and performances in their own lives?

Condillac suggests that to become conscious of the world and all it has to offer, we first need to learn how to attend to what we sense:

“We attend first to what promises to satisfy our needs and interests, which are always with us and which always direct our thought. Our knowledge of what promises to satisfy our needs and interests is a product of past experience, which has made us aware of what objects are connected with the frustration or satisfaction of those needs and interests. The needs and interests themselves are developed as a consequence of a past experience of pleasure and pain, which in turn are intrinsic features not just of tactile experience, but [also] of all of our sensations.”⁸

In my interpretation of Condillac’s theory, it becomes clear that if a person is unaware or has never experienced (tactilely) the action being presented to them visually, their ability to kinesthetically empathize on a deep, personal and emotional level is limited. If we look at the playing of US sport or music, people are more apt to relate to those activities because they represent known bodily actions that have been presented to them through their education and with the influence of mass media: they don’t have to interpret what the bodies are doing; they have ingrained context and knowledge. But, if we shine our light again towards concert dance, can the display of moving bodies, presented through stage, screen or photo, engage someone to the point of kinesthetic empathy, who has no connection to those types of actions in their lives? In short, the answer would be no, unless they’ve had some previous type of experience with concert dance or movement, which in our current times is not typically a modern dance experience.

Of course one could argue that a person may not need to know about a particular movement or action in order to relate to it, taking into account the many people who enjoy sports or live music without ever having played either. And while

yes, it is true to a degree that one can enjoy those actions without ever having done it themselves, in order to fully appreciate the events unfolding before their eyes, an awareness of the kind of work, both physical and mental, that goes into them, permits those actions to resonate more with the viewer. Everyone has their individual way of comprehending the particular body language they are witnessing based on their own experiences, and this becomes clearer when we begin to ask our friends or families what they are truly passionate about: a dancer will be mesmerized by dance because of his/her experience with it, just as someone who used to play sports or music will be attracted to watching a game on television or attending a music recital/concert. We support what we know.

In highlighting this empathetic link even more, Condillac presents an example of how movement (gesture) and language (sound) relate to emotional and physical empathy. Again in his essay *Traité des Sensations*, he describes a situation where one child (presumably hungry), cries out and gestures (reaching out with his arms) towards a fruit on a tree, unreachable from where he stands. Another child, witnessing the first, looks to the tree the child is gesturing towards and notices the fruit. As a result, the second (viewing) child experiences the same sense of feelings as the first child and is thereby moved by the other's suffering. Because the action of wanting something (the reach) and the vocalization of sadness (crying) are both actions/gestures that they have both (in theory) embodied, there is a bond between the two: empathy. Condillac's assertion is that if we can connect our own history with that of another, then the likelihood of deeper understanding is increased, resulting in

an empathetic “conversation” that lives through the language of gesture and movement.

The goal of concert dance is to create these empathetic links with audiences through the use of sound, movement, and gesture. And if that were truly effective 100% of the time, then there would be no need for this current research, as the art form would have found its voice in successfully relating to the greater population. However, as I mentioned before, I would argue that the reality is that there is a tendency for many current modern/contemporary choreographers, whether it is a conscious or unconscious decision on their part, to create works that are already geared for specific audiences that know about, understand, and support dance, leaving many non-dance people in the dark about what the art form is or has to offer. This large segment of the population may want to come and see or try to understand concert dance, but it will never be nurtured and encouraged if the works cannot connect to them on a human, empathetic emotional level. So where are the works that *will* speak to them? Where are the works that *will* connect to them personally? As Irish philosopher, William Molyneux (*Molyneux's Problem*) proposed to John Locke in 1688, “. . . would a person born blind to perceive spatial features well enough upon first sight . . . be able to identify cubes and spheres without touching them?”⁹ In short: no. A public that has never engaged with a concert dance experience will never be able to empathize, understand, or enjoy what is currently being produced if it is not relatable to who they are as people first.

Language & Prosody

Returning again to *Choreographing Empathy*, Susan Foster points out that Condillac saw the eventual evolution of verbal language as an extension of physical gesture, where sounds, and eventually words, came to represent primitive physical human actions. As societies evolved, so did the development of formal language, with human vocalization emerging as a response, mimicking the patterns of stress and intonation of the physical, gestural language. This relationship between verbal and physical languages is known as *prosody*, and again, is important to understand not only for my research in dance marketing, but why this is a hurdle concert dance must overcome in order to reach and engage with an audience: the meaning of movement.

Prosody reflects how language is used, not in terms of structure, but in approach. We notice prosody by the way someone speaks; whether they are happy, sad, angry, bored or nervous; the type of the usage (statement, question, or command); if there is any emphasis on words; if they speak with irony or sarcasm; or any other elements that are not connected to choice of grammar or vocabulary: “‘Therefore to take the place of the violent bodily movements, the voice was raised and lowered by strongly marked intervals.’ The vivid and clarifying powers of gesture [becoming] incorporated into the voice’s tone and intensity.”¹⁰ A simple example of prosody is a statement such as, “I need a long vacation.” Depending on what is emphasized, this statement could be expressed as, “*I* need a long vacation,” or “I need a *long* vacation,” or “I need a long vacation?” Just as the intent of a verbal statement can result in varied meanings, then it would be easy to arrive at the

conclusion that this also exists within physical language, with gestures offering different energies and tone depending on the use *physical prosody*.

As one would suspect, the types of prosody that can occur depend on factors such as culture and context. Condillac states, “In the same way that the tone used for anger in England is only that of surprise in Italy, so the temperament of Asians, more vivacious and dramatic, manifests in their mode of conversation.”¹¹ We see traces of prosody in cultures such as the Greeks and the Italians with their ever-mocked forms of hand speaking used in pop culture references such as gangster movies or comedies. According to Isabella Poggi, Professor of Psychology at Rome Tre University, gestures came over to Italy between the 8th and 7th centuries BC from the Greeks who began colonizing areas along the Mediterranean (including southern Italy) due to lack of usable farmland, famine, and overcrowding back in their homeland. The Greeks ventured far and wide to set up new sites for ports, allowing for commercial exchanges to grow and develop throughout the region; and along with their families and customs, they also brought their language, both verbal and physical to these new areas.

The Greeks were (and are) very expressive people, and used their arms and bodies all the time when talking to each other. As their new towns grew and mixed with the local Italian population, the need for fuller and more visible gestures evolved out of a necessity to be noticed and to stand apart from the others. It became an unspoken type of competition in these new towns suggests Professor Poggi. Gestures, both simple and complex, were then passed down from generation to generation, over centuries, to where now all Italians use it in some form of communication. Professor

Poggi has documented that there are over 250 gestures,¹² which are used during daily conversations by Italians: some to insult, beg, and swear, while others show approval or support.

Although not exact prosody, but another excellent example on how gestures can convey meaning, is the Indian book *Natyashastra*,¹³ (also called *Natyasastra* or *Natya Shastra*). This treatise is a handbook on the dramatic arts presented within classical Sanskrit theater, giving detailed information on structure and communication on both Indian music and dance. The document has been difficult to date, and author credit has also been disputed, but for the most part, a majority of scholars believe it to have been written by the mythic sage Brahman and the priest Bharata somewhere between 200 BC and 200 AD.¹⁴

The *Natyashastra*, “. . . describes in meticulous detail how correct performance of hand gestures, eye movements, posture, steps, coordination with music, and posture will affect an audience's comprehension of the narrative and its meaning.”¹⁵ It classifies thirteen positions of the head, thirty-six of the eyes, nine of the neck, thirty-seven of the hand, and ten of the body.¹⁶ Like its counterpart drama, dance is a portrayal of eight universal emotions: love, humor, energy, anger, fear, grief, disgust, and astonishment: “These [emotions] are not conveyed directly to the audiences, but are portrayed through their causes and effects. In observing and imagining these emotions, the audience experiences eight principal responses, or *rasas*: love, pity, anger, disgust, heroism, awe, terror, and comedy.”¹⁷ The *Natyashastra*, however, assumes that the presentation of the performance resides within a ritual context, where the form and content are dictated by an already

established cultural convention. But what happens when it is not performed in a specific matter or under a common viewpoint, as is the case with Western modern dance?

Unlike the strict code of movement meaning within the *Natyashastra*, Western modern dance has no defined context or rules, as each choreographer creates his or her own language to fit their current project. In addition, that language may also change, evolve, and morph in subsequent works, resulting in the possibility that a viewer might relate to one works' language but not another. Modern dance offers no "guidebook" for viewer that describes or mandates what meanings certain actions or gestures have because if there were, then dance would have no problem communicating to the masses as everyone would be able to follow what is unfolding before them. But unfortunately, simple gestures, though the physical action may appear to be the same, may not carry the same meaning for everyone because they can produce different outcomes depending on various factors such as context, where they are from, culture, race, religion, and what type of upbringing they've had.

As we grow up, gestures become part of our personal history, and we are inherently connected to them. As a result, when we witness movements that appear out of our usual context, they can sometimes be hard to decipher, understand or rationalize. We must then work and search for possible meanings to what these new movements may be saying to us: "The process of reflection becomes possible through a cognitive ability to associate ideas, one that connects the cry or gesture to something in the world."¹⁸ If the movement is taken away from our encoded environments, it becomes abstract, and we lose our ability to connect it: we don't

“buy” into it. We may have an idea of what is being said, but the interpretation and integration are very dependent on our own personal history and experience since there is no such movement system in the U.S. as that which is available in India.



A non-movement example, one which I think illustrates this issue clearly and which is useful in my argument about how abstract gesture in dance marketing can create confusion for the viewer, is our relationship to GGI (computer generated images). When we watch a big budget action film on the big screen, one filled with elaborate scenes created by CGI, our minds believe them to be true as long as they are within our realm of reality: sense of weight, speed, color, etc. When there is a scene that portrays a lack of real earth-bound physics or realities, it instantly creates a wall between the viewer and the action, making anything, however subtle, appears fake to us: we are able to notice when things do not fit into what our world or environment is. Current dance performances and dance marketing, with their identities anchored in the abstract, are victims of this scenario; presenting images that revolve around the presentation of real humans bodies moving, but portraying them through abstract manifestations that the typical non-dance audience may not normally be able to relate to. The result is in negating its authenticity, acceptability, and as will be mentioned in Chapter Three, value. So if viewers cannot connect to dance via the fluid structure of body language meaning, how do they or can they relate to it?

Emotional & Physical Connection

To answer that question, we must again return to Susan Leigh Foster, this time with her lecture on kinesthetic awareness, *Kinesthetic Empathies & the Politics of*

Compassion. In 2011, Foster presented a three-part lecture series (*The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe*, *Choreographies of Writing*, and *Kinesthetic Empathies & the Politics of Compassion*) during the Annual Philadelphia Live Arts Festival presented in conjunction with The Pew Center for Arts and Heritage. Dr. Linda Caruso Haviland, Associate Professor at Bryn Mawr College, and founder and director of its dance program was asked by The Pew Center to write a series of commentaries on each of Foster's three lectures; she wrote:

“These are lectures, first and foremost, with all the complex content and trajectory of a ‘normal’ academic lecture, but delivered by a bodied speaker who refuses to hold still, who is neither hemmed in by academic etiquette nor careful to avoid the inevitable, everyday human gesture that could distract from the all-important delivery of the sacrosanct text and its self-contained meaning.”¹⁹

Within *Kinesthetic Empathies & the Politics of Compassion*, Foster connects to the theories of Condillac through the premise of understanding how people watching other people move could relate to what the moving body *is* doing. However, for this talk, Foster introduces two new proponents of kinetic empathy, 18th-century French scholar, Monsieur Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt, and 20th-century dance critic, John Martin, to help provide information on what kinaesthesia means to us, especially as a species that thrives off of clear communication and relationships.

But before we investigate Jaucourt and Martin's theories, we must first learn what is meant by the term kinaesthesia. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines kinesthesia as “a sense mediated by receptors located in muscles, tendons, and joints and stimulated by bodily movements and tensions.”²⁰ To be even more precise, it is about being consciously aware of the body during active motion, learning how to achieve a desired pathway of movement by recognizing the behavior of the body in

said movement. Examples could be of one simply walking or, for those with ballet or modern dance training, of performing a pirouette. We learn how to move and repeat the action by connecting the proprioceptive information within the physical body to that of the cognitive understanding of the brain. This link gives us detailed information about where we are in space and what we are doing, relegating the mastered physical behavior into an unconscious thought that we may duplicate at other times without too much additional thought.

According to Foster, Jaucourt's philosophy proposes that we (the viewing body) experience the same physical sensations while watching a moving body due to an understanding of their physical and environmental situation: what they are doing and where they are doing it. On the other hand, she explains that Martin contends that the viewer comprehends the meaning of dance (and to a larger extent, all movement) through actual inner physical mimicry of muscles and nerves. "How might another body witnessing this body imagine what it is feeling?"²¹ Foster asks, as she dances, walks, clings to a chalkboard, stands on a table, and even balances on a trash bin, in allowing the audience to gain insight into her approach to kinesthetic (kinaesthesia) awareness. With the definition of kinaesthesia in mind, we can surmise that Jaucourt is interested in how we (the viewer) interpret movement from a relational (experiential) viewpoint, while Martin explores how we connect to it on a physical (cellular) level.

But where do Monsieur Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt and John Martin fit in with their theories on kinetic empathy now that we have a better understanding of how people may struggle to connect with concert dance thanks to our research with

Condillac? According to Foster, Jaucourt wrote about the emotional experience a viewer has when watching something precarious, such as seeing a tight ropewalker complete a perilous feat. In witnessing such a feat, the spectator becomes engaged in the performer's actions, their rebalancing and shifting of weight due to gravity and their relationship to the environment. They take into account the height, how far the body is from the ground, and also what possible elements in the surrounding area could be potential sources of harm and trouble. In observing this body in a precarious position or movement, “. . . the viewer experiences the stirring up of emotions that instinctually arises when we see those like ourselves in peril.”²² Therefore, according to Jaucourt, physical danger, high emotion, and stress seem to be ways to empathize with someone performing in front of us.

One only needs to view the choreographic work of Elizabeth Streb to see how Jaucourt's theory rings true: “. . . how can movement elicit sorrow, fright, humor, excitement and the desire to live a better life – all at once,”²³ Streb asks. An American choreographer, performer, and teacher, Elizabeth Streb is known for her extremely physical and risk-taking work, which incorporates principles of circus, rodeo, and daring stunts into her choreographies. Her works primarily focus on single actions, particularly falls and collisions, and their relation to time, weight, and space to the human body. Risk is the dominant factor in all her compositions, “. . . often giving the audience sensations of extreme feelings while watching the performers.”²⁴ “I want them to be grabbing their arms of their chairs, or the person's thigh next to them that they may not even know, and just pay attention,”²⁵ she states.

Her work, or at least the sensation of it from the audience's point of view, is

akin to watching the daredevil actions of Cirque de Soleil or theater immersive shows like De La Guarda or Fuerza Bruta²⁶ where the spectators become enraptured by the sheer beauty of the performances, but keenly aware of the dangers involved. The prospect of injury or hazard in all these performances engage the audience kinesthetically due to the relationship of the viewer's own body to the performer's body, and these are tangible links that emerge as they watch "real" people, not abstract representations of humans, doing activities that can have known dire consequences. However, do we feel a sense of danger or risk looking at current dance advertisements and promos?

On the other hand with John Martin, Foster explains that his belief was that audiences could come to understand movement through actual inner physical mimicry of muscles and nerves. Going further than Jaucourt, Martin believed it was not just about imagining ourselves in the same bodily situation, but of actually physically doing (on a cellular level) what we are seeing: ". . . since human bodily responses were linked to human emotional states, kinesthetic responses to watching other humans move or dance would evoke or generate an emotional universal response."²⁷ In her lecture, Foster illustrates this theory by scratching a chalkboard with her fingernails, evoking physical responses from the audiences to her action. Viewers "felt" what the moving body was "feeling," connecting motion created by muscles from both parties into one action. Interestingly enough, according to a German/UK university research experiment by Vassilis Sevdalia and Markus Raab titled, *Empathy in Sports, Exercise, and the Performing Arts*, there seems to be evidence that supports Martin's theory:

“It was shown that for those spectators who had acquired visual experience in a particular dance style (i.e., Indian dance), higher scores in fantasy (a subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index²⁸) were positively associated with larger MEPs (motor evoked potentials) in a muscle controlling arm movements. This result complements the relationship between activity in the action-observation network and aspects of empathy.”²⁹

In layman’s terms, this means that people with previous physical experiences in dance (or even in sports) were more prone or able to mimic the movements internally while solely observing the actions taking place in front of them. I know from my personal experiences in attending dance performances that my body sometimes starts to move with the dancers, possibly leaning with my torso over to one side or of having subtle ticks of movements flow through my legs and arms. In the case of this experiment mentioned above, the participants already had previous knowledge of Indian dance.



According to Foster’s lecture and her use of scratching a chalkboard, majority of people know how that sounds and feels and therefore are attuned to the uncomfortable sounds it produces. But can we really say the same with abstract dance movement? Foster acknowledges that perception of movement is dependent on context, and therefore introduces 18th-century philosopher and economist, Adam Smith. Smith, a Scottish philosopher and author of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), and *An Inquiry into the Nature and Cause of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), states that no matter the situation, ultimately we can never know another’s pain, joy or intent. Not because we can’t understand or grasp the situation, but because what they are going through is *their* experience, not ours; it is ultimately something unique.

Therefore the abstract nature (language) of concert dance, either live or in a digital format, can only provide a vast, opaque net of probable connections that gives no set definitions to learn, no correct calculations to achieve, and no firm consensus to confirm what it can mean. Audiences are left to infer meaning, to put together a patchwork of ideas based on personal experiences and sensations in relation to the moving body. Many choreographers love this idea, and relish in what the audience brings to the table. However, not all artists are in a favor of this open agenda.

Choreographer Lloyd Newson, Artistic Director of the London-based physical theater group DV8, strives to tackle this issue straight on. In 2015, his company released a four-minute promotional video³⁰ that not only gives the viewer a visual representation of the physical language the company works in, but also a clear verbal description of what the company does. Unlike traditional, purely physical, and non-verbal promotional videos produced and seen these days, such as the Doug Varone clip described in the Introduction, the DV8 promo offers a marriage of both verbal and physical languages to give a more well-rounded substance to what we are seeing. Through the combination, viewers receive concrete ideas on the history of the company, what the company represents, what it is striving for, and how all those elements feed into their latest work, *John*.

With Newson narrating, he speaks to the approach he and the company takes, about what themes they explore, and how the works developed. He explains how the company changed from solely movement based design to a fuller theatrical incarnation, incorporating acting, sets, film and of course, language: “However impressive the moves and athleticism might have been that we were doing,

ultimately, I felt we were conning audiences about the depth that we were supposedly presenting. If you want to address social, psychological human issues . . . dance [alone] has huge limitations.”³¹ With this quote, it becomes clear that Newson made the realization that inferring exact meaning solely from body language was limited and ambiguous; but by incorporating other communicative and stage elements within his works, he was able to forge a type of theatrical experience for the spectator that allowed for fuller engagement with the work.



If we quickly go back and review the ideas presented forth in this chapter, of kinetic empathy, of lack of specific meaning in movement, and lack of engagement through emotion, we can then say that DV8’s promo succeeds because it understands that concert dance movement by itself is limited in being able to convey accurate meaning. Newson acknowledges that audiences need some type of verbal reference to connect the abstract visual feast of dance to the brain: “Originating in an instinctual and spontaneous capacity for expression, language emerges as the conscious implementation of both vocal and gestural actions.”³² Verbal language helps shape a thought, a path; it allows others to follow us and stay connected.

The power of concert dance resides in its physicality and movement invention; however, I am starting to become aware how only working with abstract physical movement can create a labyrinth, leading audiences on unguided adventures, which may seem difficult to navigate for many. *What is it saying? What do those actions represent? What if I don’t “get it”?* are a few remarks I have heard many times at concert dance performances throughout the past years, and this is just from seeing live performances. What happens when it is a photo or on film or video? How are *we*

supposed to transmit our artistic intentions and ideas through a non-living format with a language that is already a challenge to decipher live? To go deeper in trying to answer these questions, we must next look at how the concert dance industry engages its patrons with its marketing strategies.

NOTES

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- ²⁸ The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) is a published measurement tool for the multi-dimensional assessment of empathy. It was developed by Professor of Psychology at Eckerd College, Mark H. Davis.
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Chapter Three

A LOOK AT THE MARKETING OF CONCERT DANCE

What you got to make sure to do, and this is the hardest part for all of us to do, is to put that corporate agenda aside, and you've got to, quite frankly, get over yourself.¹

Graeme Newell

Marketing

The American Marketing Association (AMA), a leading organization promoting the elevation and growth of effective marketing, defines the term as, “. . . the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.”² AMA, which provides innovative research for the implementation of successful marketing plans and solutions to both industry designers (advertising teams) and academics (teachers), has as their mission, assisting businesses to find methods that can help influence the way the consumer, or audience in our case, perceives their company and its product to be. Implementations of these strategies differ for items such as clothing and food, or to what this thesis is investigating, entertainment events like music concerts, sports games, and dance performances. However, whatever the commodity may be, the objective of the company's marketing design is the same: to connect with the consumer and have them *support* and *buy* their product.

An example of the incredible influencing power of marketing is the açai berry craze from a few years ago, where the açai (pronounced "ah-sah-ee") fruit from South America became heavily marketed as the next “superfruit” through extensive, yet at

times dubious, ad campaigns. Almost overnight, people began buying up whatever items they could find (organic sorbet, shampoo, energy drinks, supplement pills) that had the amazing fruit, regardless of taste or price. The apparent benefits of the açai extolled through various television commercials and infomercials led millions of people to connect immediately to it through the proclaimed wonders of what it could do for them. People were able to see themselves in the advertisements and therefore related to the various messages directed at them: transportation. It was, “. . . billed as a miracle cure for, among other things, obesity, attention-deficit disorder, autism, arthritis, Alzheimer’s disease, and erectile dysfunction.”³ While some of these claims were eventually proven false, the persistent and very imaginative advertisements prompted many in the United States to take notice, eventually leading to a presentation, and slight promotion/endorsement, on the highly viewed Oprah Winfrey Show in 2009.

Today, all sorts of businesses are in constant motion planning out multiple and sophisticated campaigns in hopes of achieving or equaling the stunning impact of the açai fruit and others successfully marketed products. All strive to make their products part of a “want” list that directly connects with the public (consumers) to become a top choice for purchase. Companies place their hopes (and investments) in the hands of advertising teams to discover ways of reading the public’s mind, aiming to persuade them into buying their goods and services to ensure some type of recognition and profit. In the early days of mass media, advertisement agencies concentrated their efforts in print, radio and television, but today, this list has expanded to include the Internet, phone, computer Apps, billboards, and even

clothing. Marketing groups now need to think of and create multiple means of reaching, and attracting, potential costumers, many of who use various systems and formats to access information and entertainment. And according to Professor Holbrook, a key ingredient incorporated through all of these forms is with the use of *emotion*.

As previously mentioned in my introduction, Columbia University marketing professor Morris Holbrook researched how ad agencies re-designed their advertising strategies from those that purely concentrated on quantifiable facts (the product is *this*, and it does *that*), to ones incorporating human emotion. This shift transformed the industry by making designers reframe their promotional efforts, changing the emphasis from *what* a product *is*, to *how* the product makes a person *feel*. As a result, marketing researchers became increasingly interested in investigating the, “. . . effects of ‘attitude toward the ad’ (Att-Ad) —i.e., the receiver's affective response to the advertisement itself as opposed to the brand it represents,” as they designed their new and updated ad campaigns. Foote, Cone & Belding, one of the largest global advertising agency networks at work today, in furthering the development of advertising, also suggested that consumer consumption decisions could be classified into two categories: “thinking” or “feeling,” with, “. . . informational [thinking/fact-based] advertising used to build recall for thinking products such as cars, furniture, or cameras, while emotional [feeling-based] appeals should be used to promote attitude changes toward feeling products such as jewelry, cosmetics, or fashion items.”⁴ By having this two-tiered system in place, it then becomes easy to situate cultural events

into the latter category where the incorporation of “feeling” in marketing designs allows ads to connect emotionally with consumers.

However, since not all goods are equal in worth or importance to the buyer, it is essential that businesses market the services and merchandise they provide in modes that seem useful and attractive to the consumer. If we quickly look again at the definition of marketing as stated by the AMA: “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large,” then it is key to focus on the word *value* and explore what that means to potential buyers/audiences, especially those for sports, music and dance events. Value may have multiple meanings attached to it, but the most important definition in terms of the scope of this research is what the consumer believes they get in return: the perceived value of their purchase. While a great deal of thought may go into how cost, packaging, and competition may affect product perception, attention to the value for the customer is far more critical in helping generate interest, support, and trust with the public. The previously mentioned açai fruit craze succeeded because it tapped into a core aspiration that is prevalent in our current culture: getting healthy in a fast, easy, and fun way. Through the use of smart marketing (transportation), businesses were able to elevate the value of the fruit, successfully selling it to a ready and willing populace who literally “ate it up.” This strategy is, therefore, crucial for all companies to embrace if their marketing plans are to achieve positive and profitable results.

Even though I am explaining a basic marketing concept that commercial industries use every day, it is important to remember that they are not the only ones

who make use of advertising. Cultural businesses, such as sports, music, and the performing arts, all use marketing to garner attention, gain attendance to their live events and shows, and help sell merchandise and subscriptions. However, as opposed to goods that are geared specifically towards satisfying basic human needs (food, clothing, shelter), cultural events are in the business of selling thrills and experiences; and as a result, they have to associate themselves to the *wants* of a person, to their desires, as we don't need culture to live, but having them does make life better.

All the three event types (sports, music, and dance) I have researched are able to attract audiences to their respective shows and programs, but where they differ is in *how* they go about achieving that. For instance, in watching television promos for sports and music, the center of attention in these advertisements is either an athlete or musical artist, or a presentation of the energy and excitement of the crowds, not necessarily the actual game or show. Mark Cuban, an American businessman, investor, host on the television program, *Shark Tank*, and owner of the NBA team the Dallas Mavericks, suggests on his blog, *Blog Maverick*, it is not the game that makes a person want to attend it, but the fun and unique experience that can be had at the event: "We in the sports business don't sell the game, we sell unique, emotional experiences."⁵ This philosophy is noted very well in a 2012 Major League Baseball Promo,⁶ and a Taylor Swift's 1989 tour trailer,⁷ where both clips present an air of excitement and energy, giving the viewer a taste of what could happen, and who might appear at the events. There is passion and euphoria that echoes Cuban's thoughts about how these gatherings can be social, inclusive, and participatory. Their respective narrations offer insights that underpin the images, making them feel more

vibrant and alive to the watch, and emotions are present, both from the performers and the live spectators, contributing to a sense of specialness and uniqueness as Cuban mentioned. These expressions of joy and excitement stand in stark contrast when looking at dance promos, as these aforementioned occurrences are not seen nor acknowledged in their presentations.

In 2015, the New York-based dance group, the Doug Varone Company,⁸ released a short promo for their upcoming performance season, which shows the company dancers on stage, supported by a minimal, repetitive sound score, moving in and out of unison, and relegated to a black proscenium stage space. Selected quotes from past company reviews are displayed on the screen, but we don't get a strong sense of *who* the dancers are, *what* the show might be about, or *why* we should attend. Unlike the MLB and Swift videos that show the energy of both performers and spectators at the events, this clip focuses only on the dancers and their movements. This kind of advertisement is not as effective in drawing the viewer in because it offers no sense of excitement or emotion (especially for the non-dance public) to attend the shows: they don't answer the *why* and *how* the work relates to the public and their lives. This style of advertising may work for fans of the company or of concert dance, but again, what about those who are not? What in these traditional types of dance promotions will entice a non-dance viewer to want to go out and see these shows? The Varone video, and others like it, does the exact opposite of what Cuban suggests will attract audiences: it focuses *only* on the product (dance in this case), and leaves out the important viewer experience from the equation. The success (or failure) of a video like this hinges on its ability to display and transmit a sense of

engagement with the company's abstract movement language, rather than through a felt emotional connection with the viewer; and from my point of view with this research, it is not that successful.



In thinking about why concert dance marketing campaigns seemed ineffective or lacked appeal, I looked to American feminist author, and cultural dance critic, Jill Johnston, and her 1957 article *Abstraction in Dance*, Johnston, to gain insight on what was missing, or what being too focused on in dance marketing. In her write-up, she states: “The instrument [in performance] is the body, the human body. That is the first premise.”⁹ What Johnston proposes by writing this is that the body, our flesh and blood, is what we all have in common, what we all share, and is the first thing we see when another person is in front of us *performing*. The viewer connects with the performer on this pure basic humanistic level, acknowledging that the entity they/we see in front of them/us is *like* them/us; a *reflection* of them/us. This recognition also aids in the spectator being able to decode any dramatic information embedded within the work because they can relate and empathize with the performers as humans, not “ideas.”

Johnston also suggests two other levels in how the performing body is viewed, which are the predominate elements that choreographers use when creating dances: a second premise as a functional, social, emotional, and rational entity, and finally, a third as a body moving in time, with energy, and with gestures.¹⁰ These aspects permit dance artists to move beyond the basic human presence and into what my research will show, a current representation (live or digital) of concert dance that is more interested (not all) in conceptual presentations of physical indulgence and self-

awareness than of representing tangible human emotion and expression. This, in my belief, blocks the non-dance viewer from the potential of connecting emotionally to the presented dance works, as can be observed with the previously discussed Doug Varone promotional video. Johnston states, “. . . when drama is eliminated, movement in its spatial-temporal and dynamic aspects becomes the sole aesthetic focus;”¹¹ and though the choreographer may have the intent to present a body as *body*, solely seeing a person move around on stage in an abstract fashion is not relatable for most of the general public. Again, we see this clearly in the Varone clip.

If concert dance is to have successful event-audience relationships, the first required step is to give importance and value to the human-to-human connection. Sports games and music concerts, through the physical and verbal languages they use, the fact that these events have long been systematically fed to the masses through the media, and that many have had first-hand experience of them through personal embodiment (for some, not for all), have irrefutably established the performers in their respective actions as “real” people. Again, this permits the viewers (the seeing body) to have a clearer understanding of what they (the moving body), and their movements, represent. Unfortunately, within concert dance, this premise is not what is typically displayed first.

In order to shed light on this issue, and to get a better grasp on dance marketing, I canvassed the Internet searching for images and videos dance companies and organizations have used to market their choreographic works. I then broke these items into two separate groups: photographic images, and videos/films, to focus on analyzing them in terms of message and engagement. The results are below.

Photo Marketing

It is amazing the sheer amount of photos that come up when you do basic searches like “modern dance photos,” “postmodern dance photos,” or “emotional dance photos.” Some were quite fascinating and beautiful, while others were just trite and uninteresting. Image after image, color vs. B & W, solo vs. group, close up vs. far away, young vs. old, and male vs. female, I found that the “looks” could be divided up into four distinct categories: *technical, design, emotive, or pedestrian*; with each one expressing something very different to the person looking upon them.

Technical photos portray the usual style of dance marketing that everyone has seen on posters, billboards, magazine ads, etc. The primary objective of this category is in showcasing the body’s ability to do “amazing” things, such as jumping high in the air, leaping forward with both legs extended, holding beautiful leg extensions, being upside down in a some difficult handstand position, standing on the tips of the toes with hair flinging back, or flexing the body back in a deep backbend. Prime examples of this category are photos of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater photographed by Andrew Eccles. (Figures 1, 2, and 3) Since 2007, London-born Eccles has captured many Ailey dancers in breathtaking physical feats, displaying not only their technical prowess as dancers but also their sculpted and athletic bodies. New Yorkers know when an Ailey performance season is around the corner as they can’t escape the barrage of colorful and vibrant posters put up at subway stations, kiosks or large billboards around the metropolitan area, showing off the dancers bodies in displays of strength, line, and muscularity. The concepts behind these types of images: strength, body, power, and command.



(Figure 1.) Yannick Lebrun in Robert Battle's *Takademe*.
Photo by Andrew Eccles.



(Figure 2.) Briana Reed. Photo by Andrew Eccles.



(Figure 3.) Yannick Lebrun and Antonio Douthit. Photo by Andrew Eccles.

Design photos are comprised of people making shapes, either by themselves or with other bodies. A lot of partnering work falls under this category that uses not only a great deal of technique, but also strength. Usually, these images are posed or set up, often showing a person holding onto another body to form some type of deep

extended counterbalance, or with the bodies pressed together, holding or molding together, enabling a human landscape to be revealed. Many seem predominantly heterosexual in nature, used to show off the strength and riskiness of the dancers by having the men lift the women high up in the air. These can somewhat be read as relationship oriented, but most are too abstract in design to make out what the “relationship” actually consists of. Overall, these images are more about the architecture of the bodies in space, and what shapes they can create together, than what they can mean. Like the technical photos, they are created to amaze the viewer, but not always in the “virtuosic” way. The dance group Pilobolus fits into this category. (Figures 4 & 5.)



(Figure 4.) Pilobolus Photo by Robert Whitman



(Figure 5.) Pilobolus. Photo by John Kane

Emotive photos have more personality or expressivity to them than the other categories. These are usually closer in framing of the body, exposing more of the face (raw, imperfect, and vulnerable), and reflective or pensive in nature. They have more weight and tension to them as opposed to the energetic and light qualities of bodies in action. They also require deeper attention, inviting our gaze to match their returning emotional projection, causing us to wonder what they could be thinking or feeling in that frozen moment. These images are more subdued in nature, allowing the subject's humanness to come forth, silently whispering in our ears about their possible secret stories. Two wonderful examples that showcase this feeling are the 1948 photo of Martha Graham by Yousuf Karsh, and the 1978 photo of Pina Bausch by Anna Wloch, taken during a performance of *Café Müller*. (Figures 6 & 7.) As a side note, for his photo with Graham, Karsh said, "There was no room to dance in her apartment. The American high-priestess of the dance sat on a stool. Yet, she seemed — she was — dancing as I took the portrait."¹²



(Figure 6.) Martha Graham Photo by Yousuf Karsh



(Figure 7.) Pina Bausch in *Café Müller*. Photo by Anna Wloch.

Finally, there are the *pedestrian* photos. These types of images are currently found on many postcards, flyers or online ads for a great deal of postmodern dance performances. This group, which is quite large in terms of content, predominately shows the performers in various states of non-action, such as standing, sitting, kneeling, crouching, lying down, or posing, as if for obscure family portraits. They are also sometimes shown either holding ordinary items in their hands or placed around some object(s) that may or may not have something to do with the work being advertised, and either staring straight into the camera or blankly out in space. Many are dressed in casual non-descript clothing, promoting the “everyday” or “common” look, while others go for more obscure and ultra designed costumes that seem made more for attention than actual function. Unlike the previous three categories, this style rarely gives the impression that what we are looking at is an actual advertisement for dance. In fact, most look like someone’s vacation photos or someone’s art school project: the more ordinary or unusual, the better. Promotional images for Sidra Bell, and collaboration between Faye Driscoll and Jesse Zaritt, illustrate this concept. (Figures 8 & 9.) Only people within the dance field, or those with some familiarity of the choreographers and dancers, would know that these postcards/flyers are promoting a dance performance; for anyone else, it could be an art exhibit or some other type of exclusive coterie event.



(Figure 8.) Jonathan Cambel, Austin Diaz, Alexandra Johnson, and Laviana Anna Maria Vago in Sidra Bell's *Stella*.
 Photo by Jubal Battisti



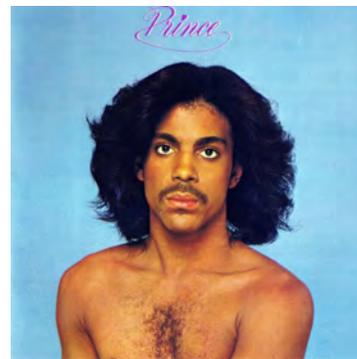
(Figure 9.) Faye Driscoll and Jesse Zarritt in *You're Me*. Photo by Christy Pessagno.



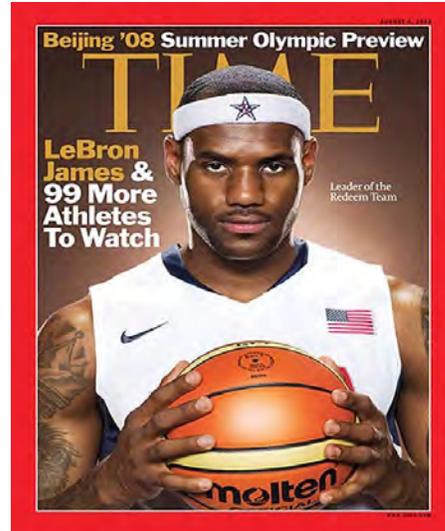
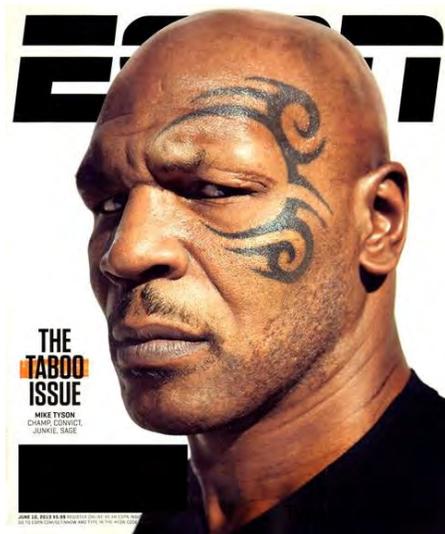
After poring over all these images, I found that the ones that “spoke” to me were those that were more intimate in nature. They intrigued me into looking at them for longer periods of time, trying to imagine what the artists staring back at me would have been feeling at the moment they were taken. Seeing the elation, sorrow, questions and affirmations on their faces, I felt as if I were looking at my personal experiences being portrayed by other people, empathizing with them because the projections of emotions were more familiar to me. And it seems that my reaction is not unusual.

According to a 2009 study from Canada, researchers looked at how human images with clear facial features, would induce a viewer to perceive, in this particular case - websites, as more appealing, having warmth, and being trustworthy compared to those sites without human photographs. In their investigation, the researchers noted that, “. . . pictures [of people’s faces] . . . [were] able to convey personal presence in the same manner as do personal photographs or letters.”¹³ In addition, the study also stated that, “. . . the face is a very important source of socio-emotional cues . . . Advertisers have found that photographs of faces attract attention and create an immediate affective response that is less open to critical reflection than text we read.”¹⁴ If we quickly think about sports and music marketing, we realize that one of their major components in advertising is not just of showing the athlete or music artist to the consumer, but their faces. Look at the predominance of faces on music albums and sport magazine covers (Figures 10 & 11), or any other type of advertizing where celebrities are included. The face draws us in, and through that instant relationship we decide to trust, fear, embrace, ignore, purchase or not. Freelance writer, Sandra

Niehaus says, “People look at faces. That’s just how we’re built, as humans. We look at eyes and mouths in particular to help us identify the person, their mood, and their intent towards us.”¹⁵ So it does not seem too far-fetched to conclude that the same emotional circumstances that exist with personal photos can also exist for dance advertising. My recent unscientific experience with all these photos leads to that same conclusion, as well as recognizing society’s current fascination, or obsession, with Facebook and “selfies.”



(Figure 10.) Sia by Erick Lang, Prince by Chris Callis, Phil Collins, by Pete Ashworth, and Adele by Alasdair McLellan.



(Figure 11.) Mike Tyson by Joe Pugliese, Gus Kenworthy by Peter Hapak, Mike Trout by Patrik Giardino, and LeBron James by Jill Greenberg.

Video Marketing

As with the variety of photographic images, so too, is there a plethora of concert dance videos available for anyone to view over the Internet. Furthermore, they can also be categorized into separate groups, allowing for more detailed analysis about what they offer and promote. For ease, I have followed the traditional classifications of dance videos as either being for documentation purposes or as video dance. Within these two categories, they can also be split up into smaller sub-groups: performance or rehearsal footage, and narrative or non-narrative. Nevertheless, regardless of which version is created, the presentation of movement and gesture is at the core of these videos.

The *documentary* method, which is predominately used for archival purposes, gives the viewer a representation of an actual performance or rehearsal through the use of clear, sometimes static, recording of what the work was/is, where it was done, when it was done, and who did it. Many choreographers use these films as tools in resetting works with other companies or when giving other roles to new dancers, as most performers usually do not stay with the same companies for very long. These clips, though sometimes not the best quality, are typically used as advertisements, especially for artists with low marketing budgets, since all it takes is a camera, a tripod, and maybe someone to control and record it.

Due to financial and time limitations, a majority of video marketing clips for dance consists of using documentary style footage patched together from one or multiple performances, creating a longer promotional film that displays the work of the choreographer or company. As previously mentioned, this is useful in getting

insight on the physical language in the work(s), but it leaves little to be engaged by if one were looking for something flashy. Case in point is a 2009 New York Season promo from the Martha Graham Dance Company¹⁶ in which we see excerpts from their repertory *Clytemnestra*, *Lamentation Variations*, *Sketches from Chronicle*, and *Maple Leaf Rag*. Other than selected moments from the dances edited together and underscored by Egyptian-American composer Halim El-Dabh's music, we don't get much more substantial information or imagery to engage us. The promo is put together using mostly static long and medium shots, making the video feel flat, unenergetic, and devoid of personality. Also, by the fact that the dancers were in costumes, with stage lights, and on a proscenium stage, we can infer that these dances were filmed during a previous performance and might be dated performance material. In essence, the purpose of the clip is to display Graham's choreography to dance organizations and fans, showing what the company would be dancing during their upcoming performance season: it was not created to connect with non-dancers.

Another quick example of this style of promotion is one used by the Israeli group Inbal Pinto & Avshalom Pollak Dance Company for the presentation of their work *Wallflower*.¹⁷ Again: a still camera, medium to long shots, and abstract movement, with some editing to give a sense of the scope of the work. We see the dancers placed in a specially made set design, with colorful costumes, and some interesting movement, but nothing more: the dancers remain vague and anonymous, and we are left questioning what the work is actually about. Both of these promotional videos are straightforward and practical, and for a presenter or dancers wanting to see what these artists do, they do the perfect job: they show the work and

state whose made it: very clinical and sterile. For other people that may not know too much of dance, it may leave them bored and confused as it stays in an abstract world that few non-dance audiences are privy to.

On the other hand, dance for the camera, or videodance, or screendance, is a genre of dance made specifically for camera, and utilizes film-editing techniques, scenery, and typically, non-theater locations to showcase the movement and performers in different lights. Generally, these works only exist on screen, as the movements and effects would not be the same once reproduced for the stage; but every once in a while there is some crossover, such as Merce Cunningham's 1986 film work *Points in Space*¹⁸ which was later remounted for the stage after being filmed. However, the inverse has been done more frequently with many artists, choreographers, and companies creating vibrant film versions of their stage works, allowing new and different audiences to witness the dances: Paul Taylor's *Speaking in Tongues*, Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker's *Rosas danst Rosas*, or Susan Marshall's *Arms* (The Narrow Room) are just a few examples of this crossover.

Dance for the camera has two modes of creation: one that is narrative, focusing on a story being told through movement, such as *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men*¹⁹ by the London-based physical theater group DV8, and the other, abstract, leaning towards framing the movement through the use of filming styles, such as *Amelia*²⁰ by the Canadian group (now disbanded) La La La Human Steps. Both styles encase the works in "filmic" atmospheres by their use of lighting, shots (close, medium, or long), pans, wipes, tilts, use of foreground vs. background, choice of angles, montages, framing, and shooting from above or below, among other

techniques. These choices allow the movements to be viewed from varied, non-frontal perspectives, sometimes highlighting details that probably would be unnoticed by the audience sitting in a theater watching from afar, such as someone's stare or expression. At other times it can play with distance or time allowing space and movement to be magnified, sped up or slowed down more than what can be experienced in an actual performance space.

When film tactics are employed in the recording and editing of a dance video, the results are very different, and somewhat more captivating than what can be done on stage. *What The Body Does Not Remember (Revival)*²¹ by the Belgian group, Ultima Vez is a wonderful example of this work. The film, based on the stage work of the same name, utilizes close-ups of fragmented bodies, and fast editing to give a sense of frenzy and chaos. Scenes are sometimes out of focus with the camera in close proximity to the performers, exuding the kind of energy their bodies are creating and moving through with their actual dance movement. This allows the viewer to feel on the inside, to have a more kinesthetic experience with the work as if they were one of the dancers on stage: “. . . it's easy to overlook the very real and acutely transformative effect that film and motion pictures have had on the world. Beyond just transporting viewers into new worlds and fantasies, film has the power — perhaps beyond that of any other medium — to shed light on an issue, telling a story and chronicling history,”²² states Vice President of User Experience and Creative Director of Closed Loop Marketing, Sandra Niehaus. Creating a work specifically for film allows the choreographer, in collaboration with the director, to heighten the experience for the viewer, enabling the intentions (love, despair, anger,

or loneliness) of the movement language to be more effective in reaching the viewer's eyes and mind.

In comparing both types of video genres, we see that they have movement in common, but how they present it and what the viewer gets out of it are two very different things. The Graham, and Pinto & Pollak, promos give a glimpse of the represented works, but are marketed for those in the know, who are already invested in the art form, and are looking to get a basic preview of what the next season has in store. On the other hand, the *Ultima Vez* video gives more visual information and charges the atmosphere with the dynamic risk and physicality of the dance and dancers. Graham, and Pinto & Pollak focus on the audience perspective of the movement, grounded in the presentation of the movement rather than of who is doing it, while the filming style of *Ultima Vez* gives a richer sense of participating in the dance, permitting the viewer to see more characteristics and personality of the performers, and most importantly, connect with them.



Even though basic analysis of dance photos and videos does not scientifically substantiate the notion that the average non-dance person cannot relate to any part of concert dance, it does give some credence to the theory that presenting performers as authentic, emotional humans beings is more powerful than the sole display of abstract movement actions in engaging non-dance viewers. With that being said, I don't believe that dance advertising designers are explicitly trying to be illusive or neglect potential audience members with their marketing efforts; rather, I think that they are unaware that advertising dance to the non-dance public needs to be addressed differently, by giving them concrete images and ideas to relate to. Therefore, at this

point I think it is relevant and useful to analyze ways that sports and music use their promotions to engage with consumers, thus enabling us to learn new formats that could be utilized with dance's own marketing schemes.

NOTES

¹ Graeme Newell, "Current Marketing Trends: Getting Away From Brand Narcissism," video, 4:10, November 10, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfxRgp4Dw3Y&index=4&list=PL0F977B36F18D90F6>.

² "Definition of Marketing," *AMA.org*, accessed May 30, 2016, <https://www.ama.org/AboutAMA/Pages/Definition-of-Marketing.aspx>.

³ John Colapinto, "Strange Fruit." *The New Yorker*, May 30th, 2011, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/05/30/strange-fruit-john-colapinto>.

⁴ Holbrook, "The Role of Emotion in Advertising," 46.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Datu35, "2012 MLB Postseason Promo- FOX & TBS," video, 0:29, July 21, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSpuvuQQ3KQ>.

⁷ Taylor Swift, "1989 World Tour LIVE Trailer," video, 1:00, December 13, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhttBMZT5zw>.

⁸ World Music/CRASHarts, "Doug Varone and Dancers 2015 Season Promo," video, 0:48, May 13, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQmLMssaHkM>.

⁹ Jill Johnston, "Abstraction in Dance," *Dance Observer* 24, (December 1957): 151-52.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² "The Good, The Great, & The Gifted," *National Gallery of Australia*, accessed June 1, 2016, <http://nga.gov.au/exhibition/karshshmith/Detail.cfm?IRN=49543>.

¹³ Dianne Cyr, Milena Head, Hector Larios and Bing Pan, "Exploring Human Images in Website Design: A Multi-Method Approach," *MIS Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Sep., 2009): 544.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 545

¹⁵ Sandra Niehaus, "The Human Face. How to Choose Effective Website Photos and Images, Part 3," *Practicle Ecommerce*, March 3, 2010, <http://www.practicalecommerce.com/articles/99993-niehaus-choosing-images3>.

¹⁶ Martha Graham Dance Company, "Martha Graham Dance Company 2009 New York season promo," video, 1:43, April 7, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKjFdmIIVMs>.

¹⁷ Festival Oriente Occidente, "Inbal Pinto & Avshalom Pollak Dance Company – Wallflower," video, 1:47, July 1, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qbw20wtNOg>.

¹⁸ Profesionalesartes, “4. Points in Space (1986) Choreographer Merce Cunningham Dir Elliot Caplan & Merce Cunningham.mkv,” video, 3:00, February 11, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qf_kLcdijz8.

¹⁹ Steve Miller, “Dead Dreams Of Monochrome Men - DV8 Physical Theatre,” video, 51:57, July 1, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfkmUSEqG9c>.

²⁰ Ma CC, “Amelia La La La Human Steps,” video, 59:47, December 11, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHU5QLEjGAg>.

²¹ OfficialUltimaVez, “What the Body Does Not Remember (Revival),” video, 2:41, February 26, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VNTp2Ie_KI.

²² Christina Warren, “Using Film to Change the World,” *Mashable*, September 22, 2010, <http://mashable.com/2010/09/22/using-film-to-change-the-world/>.

Chapter Four

WHAT SPORTS AND MUSIC DO DIFFERENTLY

People who claim to like pictures and book will often only respond to those pictures and books in which they can clearly find themselves.¹

Jeanette Winterson

In speaking about sports, Mark Cuban said that he had one goal in getting people to come to his games: “I want it to be very participatory. I want it to be very social. I want it to be very inclusive. I want it to be memorable. I want it to be so much fun people talk about it to their friends and can’t wait to go back.”² With Cuban’s thoughts at hand, we start to realize that sports, music, and even concert dance cannot afford to focus their marketing designs simply on their respective events; they must engage the prospective buyer into believing that what they will be “consuming” will have the value of being a fun, interesting, and an enlightening type of experience. As stated on the website *Teamsportmarketing.com*, “Individuals are motivated to consume cultural products to fulfill emotional desires for aesthetic enjoyment.”³ If this is really the case, then the use of effective marketing campaigns to target and persuade passive television, laptop, tablet, phone, or magazine/newspaper observers to connect and empathize with what they see on screen or in print, will likely increase the percentage of people who become actual engaged, active, and live performance participants. Sports, music, and dance all claim to offer their guests opportunities to experience something different, something out of the ordinary that links to their lives; but sports and music are able to present these elements in clearer formats that better connect with the viewing public. Therefore,

how do sports and music presenters market their performers and events?

Sports

In watching sports advertisements (and this applies to those that directly or indirectly promote actual games), I found four major themes used to engage the viewer:

- 1. Person - Featuring a known athlete or an athletic person as the main focus,**
- 2. Portrait - Enabling empathy between the viewing body and the moving body through the use of motivation,**
- 3. Humor - Using humor to connect with the viewer,**
- 4. Event – Showcasing the experience of the event.**

In the first three instances, it is key to note that the projection of the athlete or person (whether they are famous or not), is that of being a *real* person, and is placed above any representation of the sport they may play. This ploy permits sports marketers to connect with the public by giving them a visible face in conjunction with the products at hand, which is an important method that will be discussed again later when dealing with new dance marketing strategies.

Person – Even though I have placed this as a separate category, the premise of getting to know an athlete or person as a human being is a characteristic that permeates throughout all the other sections. This tactic echoes Jill Johnston’s assertion about the first thing people relate to when seeing others perform: the human presence. As people do not have to interpret or work too hard to see who is being presented to them, these kinds of advertisements become relatable right from the start, forging a simple, yet effective, bond between the screen and off-screen participants. If we go back to the Coke commercial I mentioned in my introduction, the encounter between “Mean” Joe Greene and the young fan was not necessarily a “sports commercial,” but rather an ad about the interaction between the two people. Yes, it

had a well-known football player, and it took place within the confines of a sports venue, but other than those facts, there was no attention given to the football game itself. The true subject of that commercial was about gaining insight into the personality of Greene, who up until the launch of this particular commercial, was known to be very intimidating, hence the nickname “Mean.” To prove the power of this “personal approach,” right after the ad premiered, people from all over the country had a newfound perspective on who he was: “‘I was suddenly approachable,’ Greene recalled during a live presentation at Coca-Cola headquarters in Atlanta; ‘Little kids were no longer afraid of me, and older people – both women and men – would come up and offer me a Coke.’”⁴ Thanks to the focus of the commercial, people were able to get past the façade of the athlete “Mean” Joe Greene, and discover more of the real person whom they could relate to.

Another commercial that shares the same feature of “person” is one from sports apparel maker, Nike, which showcases famed NBA basketball player, Michael Jordan.⁵ This simple ad, which only presents Jordan getting out of a car and walking into the practice building, is not about selling a particular product, but about selling Jordan himself, his brand. With the aid of a voice over, Jordan reveals how many times he has missed shots or lost games in his long career; and that instead of having those moments drag him down, they are the things that keep him working hard. Speaking to his failures, Jordan shows a side of himself that the public rarely gets to see or hear much about in the media; and that personal disclosure is valuable information to have as a fan, no matter who the athlete may be. Even though no actual product was being advertised in the ad, the tactic of revealing personal facts ironically

brings attention directly to his brand: Air Jordan, which, through the set up of the commercial, represents to the viewer a lifestyle or way of living that is about being humble, determined, and confident.

The last example for this category is an ad by the national chain, Dick's Sporting Goods, which shares a story of a young baseball player whose grandfather has just passed away.⁶ Through the course of the clip, we see him attend the funeral, get angry, find himself alone, get back into practice, and ultimately play a game. This commercial, made specifically to promote the retailer's "Sports Matter" initiative, emphasized the, “. . . heightened emotion of sports,”⁷ inferring that by finding a family within a sports team, one will never be alone during difficult and hard times. As with the Michael Jordan ad, there are no actual products being advertised; instead, it is the whole spectrum of sport that is being sold, as one that can foster community, no matter who you are, where you come from, or what you are going through.

These strategies are what Columbia University marketing professor Morris B. Holbrook might consider, “. . . fitting into the emotional experience of the consumer.” These types of advertisements are created to connect the viewer first to the person in the ad and then to the product or message. By making the person(s) in the advertisements “human” and “relatable,” the theory is that the consumer will relate to who they see, link the spokesperson(s) to the promoted product, and then go out and purchase or support it. Of course, this approach will only manifest itself into a positive experience if the athlete or person is someone well respected in the eyes of the viewer. As such, businesses are keenly aware of this and only select and work with those personalities who will positively attract people, either through their high

level of skill or their favorable reputation and persona.

Portrait - Another approach of sports marketing focuses not only on the athlete, but on what drives them. The athletic gear company, Under Armour, which has worked with athletes of various genres in their many promotions, understands that a player can have draw, but combining him or her with the persuasive power of motivation can actually enhance the allure and effectiveness of the ads. In their series titled *I Will: Earn Your Armour*, Under Armour concentrated on the training athletes go through, both mentally and physically, in getting ready for matches or games. These ads, designed towards cultivating the universal human trait of motivation, show that with hard work and determination, even the most difficult situations and goals can be surpassed and reached.

No stranger to working hard and pushing his body, swimmer Michael Phelps has emerged as a major figure in these Under Armour campaigns, appearing in four of its commercials since 2010. In this particular ad⁸ Phelps talks about his decision to come back to competitive swimming after taking a year off. He explains that his hunger for reaching goals was at the core of his return, and that he is very aware that it will be tough to get back into that high-performance shape he was in before. But, as one sees in the video, he is determined to do the hard work to get there. In addition to Phelps speaking about his drive to return to competitive swimming, the clip shows him working out and taking the viewer through his extremely difficult training regiment that enables him to have the strength and power to compete at high levels. What this ad underlines, and this is a message that everyone can understand, is that if you want something bad enough, you will work hard to achieve it, no matter how

hard it is.

Next is another ad from Nike that shows a man out for a run, traveling down an empty dirt road during what could be morning.⁹ As his figure comes close to the camera, he stops and proceeds to start talking to himself, arguing about whether he should continue ahead or stop. With the aid of film editing, the viewer is able to see two slightly different perspectives of the man on the road: the side of him that doesn't want to continue, in effect, holding back, and the other half that wants to continue running. Since the man is a non-celebrity, this back and forth argument permits the spokesperson to take on some depth during the course of the ad, again, allowing the viewer to put themselves in his shoes as he deliberates whether to give up or go forward. The "negative" part of his self becomes angry and defensive, discouraging progress, while the other half begins to find the courage and motivation needed to proceed. By the end of the commercial, the "positive" side decides to continue running and push his limits, leaving his "old self" behind, left in despair. The end tag of the advertisement states, "Leave your old self behind – reincarnate now." What is interesting about this ad is that, again, like the Coke and the Michael Jordan clips, it is not focused on the actual sport or the product being advertised; it is about the emotional state this person (and by default *us*) finds themselves in when faced with a challenge, and how the product (the shoes) can be a catalyst to help change that state of mind. The shoes are a symbol of surpassing the holds we all put on ourselves, allowing one to be able to discover the new person within him or herself.

World-renowned speaker, consultant, and thought leader in emotional marketing, Graeme Newell, suggests that these types of ads hit upon a theme that is

relatable to everyone: the hero story. What he means by this term is that Nike, along with other sports apparel companies, has found that creating advertisements that revolve around the premise of, “. . . a hero pitted against a great foe, and after a great struggle, emerging triumphant,”¹⁰ engage the public in deeper, more personal ways that will most likely lead to the purchasing of the promoted items. To go further, Newell suggests that marketers have actually devised these schemes to present the “enemy” as our own self, which is always the toughest person to defeat. So if we can, by using these products, triumph over our bad, weaker self, who would not be in support of that? These short portrait essays, through their use of motivation, give some insight into the person(s) in the ads, whether they are famous athletes or not. We see them sweat, cry, yell, get frustrated, and ultimately get back up and surpass their limits. These ideals are universal themes that anyone, no matter if they are a sports fan or not, can relate to. These styles of ads, in essence, show *us*.

Humor – Besides individual revelations, another segment in sports marketing is by using humor. According to columnist Patrice D. Wimbush, “Humor appeals make consumers laugh and create an emotional link with the product. A well-executed humor appeal enhances recollection, evaluation and the intent to purchase the product.”¹¹ Sports marketing uses humor as a way to soften the sometimes harsh and stormy personalities of athletes, allowing viewers to relate better with the personas, and see them as trustworthy, charming, funny, and inviting. ESPN’s SportsCenter television show has incorporated this element and developed a series of short commercials, treated in a comical fashion, to promote sports coverage as well as interviews with famous athletes and other notable people.¹² These ads are taken out of

the confines of any particular sports setting, and are placed in the backroom, halls, offices, or cafeteria of the television show, permitting the spectators to see the hosts and players in a more relaxed and neutral environment. In addition, their created (albeit somewhat exaggerated and possibly false) personas poke fun at themselves and each other, deflating egos and the sometimes seriousness of traditional interviews. Thomas Cline, Ph.D., professor of marketing and statistics at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania ascertained that, “. . . humor elevates mood, and that people may then associate their good mood with the product shown. About 30% of all ads and 50% of TV ads are based on humor.”¹³ Mark Levit, a managing partner of Partners & Levit Advertising and a professor of marketing at New York University, also suggests that, “Audiences like to be entertained, but not pitched. People will pay more attention to a humorous commercial than a factual or serious one, opening themselves up to be influenced.”¹⁴

Event – As first mentioned in Chapter Three with the example of the 2012 Major League Baseball promo, showing the energy and excitement of a sports game, gives viewers a glimpse of what the event may look and feel like. Since actual performance and outcomes and unknown quantities at games, marketers cannot show the public something that has not happened yet. As a result, ad designers showcase the fun a person can have by attending this or that event, and this supports Mark Cuban’s claim that the actual game is not the main attraction; but the fun to be had, is.



By focusing on the individual, using motivation, finding humor, and highlighting the fun time one can have at sport games, sports marketing has found a way to attract the public into engaging with it’s advertising, subsequently helping

make the products, whether they are clothing, drinks, shoes, or events, something that the public will want to buy or experience.

Music

In his blog, *Blog Maverick*, Mark Cuban stated that he wants his games to be seen as fun and participatory; this sentiment also applies greatly to how music marketers want to present music concerts. However, unlike sports marketing, which may or may not address the game played by the athletic spokesperson, music has the required task of representing the artists as the focal point of that full advertising package experience. The reason is simple: people who go to music concerts are primarily there to support the artists who will be singing, playing, and dancing on stage. Fans forge a pinnacle moment in their relationship with the music and the artists; something that has been created through multiple life moments wrapped within their own personal soundtracks. In this manner, music performances act as conduits between personal feelings and the artists who speak to them; sharing pain and happiness during those precious few hours in attendance. In my personal experience, I have been to many concerts where this has been the case, most recently with Duran Duran's *Paper Gods* concert in New York City, and Madonna's *Rebel Heart* tour in Washington, D.C. Certain songs took me back to where I was when I first heard them, making me think of what was happening in my life at that particular time. This connection between present and past allowed me to invest more of my energy and emotion in the performance, feeding off the vibe of the crowd around me as I sang and danced to my hearts content. In general, whether we are happy, sad, excited, bored, etc., these types of feelings bond us to what we like, and we want to

listen to, and in going to a concert, we are able to re-live those life memories again, even if they were painful and heart-wrenching at the time. This is important to understand because music forms a strong aspect of our lives, and every one of us, no matter age, where we are from, or what we believe in, engages with it in our own unique ways.

This symbiotic relationship is even more prevalent in how society interacts with the world of pop music. Marketing expert, author, and blogger, Jim Joseph, ponders in his article *Katy Perry: Is it the Music or the Marketing?* whether our infatuation with music artists is really due to the music they sing and play, or if it is a result of their well-planned marketing strategies. He states,

“Pop music fulfills a very special place in our pop culture, social and personal lives. I think it’s safe to say that those of us who enjoy it really ‘need’ it. We need it to lift us up. But the trick here is that we ‘want’ Katy Perry. We ‘want’ her form of pop music and the experience that she delivers along with it. And that is the inherent difference between a product and a brand. Need vs. want. We need products, but we want brands.”¹⁵



As with sports, music can also be categorized into subheadings that allow me to analyze their goals and effects better:

1. **Products - Featuring a known musician as spokesperson,**
2. **Concert trailers – Promos used to create interest in for upcoming tours/performances,**

Products – Like sports personalities, music artists are also prominently featured in television advertisings, selling products anywhere from clothing and phones to soft drinks or computers. However, unlike their athletic peers, viewers rarely get to see a more personal side of these spokespersons. Singers are typically portrayed as cultural idols, gazing at us happily from beyond the screen, but never divulging any type of

personal information that could do damage to their well-manufactured images. In fact, television ads with singers tend to be celebratory, with lots of energy, and plenty of dancing and laughter. Marketers know that the use of music spokespersons from the pop culture arena need to associate and engage with the large demographic of fashion-forward consumers who are mostly comprised of young, attractive, and fun people. Marketing-Schools.org, an online information site that offers information on marketing careers and studies explains the rationale behind this treatment:

“A successful celebrity endorser must be seen as an expert in the industry they are endorsing. Celebrity chefs will be more believable selling kitchen knives than motor oil. The celebrity must also be considered trustworthy to the demographic being marketed to. If a celebrity has a checkered past or controversial opinions it can reduce their credibility as a spokesman. Finally, they must be considered attractive to the target demographic. This is more than just physical attractiveness. This extends to respect for the celebrity's achievements and their public character.”¹⁶

The soft drink company Pepsi is a pro at using celebrity spokespersons to help sell their soda products. For years they have featured prominent singers such as Michael Jackson, David Bowie, Tina Turner, Madonna, and others, in a variety of commercials throughout the years. Recently, R&B singer Janelle Monáe¹⁷ joined this long and impressive list with her 2016 Super Bowl commercial where she is seen dancing her way through a spectrum of colorful rooms (red, white, and blue) to different songs in pop history. Monáe never speaks nor sings for the duration of the ad, only dances and smiles; that reinforces the fun and party vibe of the Super Bowl event and the product Pepsi.

Decades before, Madonna's own Pepsi commercial¹⁸ where she sees herself as a young child during a birthday party who ultimately transforms into who she has

become, also had the artist singing and dancing throughout. What Pepsi realized early on is that audiences were more interested in seeing the musical artist than the actual soft drink; and by showing what singers do best, it not only gave the viewer that important human-human connection that Jill Johnston and others have written about, it also offered a vehicle to increase visibility of its own products. This method is also in use when it comes to the promotion of actual music concerts; however, in these cases, the product is the brand of the singers themselves, not an object.

Concerts trailers - Whereas product oriented television commercials predominantly present singers as their performance alter egos, trailers, promos, and short documentaries allow their truer personalities to shine through, exposing raw, humanizing characteristics and feelings to those who are watching. For instance, Madonna's latest world tour, the *Rebel Heart Tour*, made use of backstage trailers that gave shorts insights into what was being created and rehearsed in preparation for the show.¹⁹ The performers talk about how in awe they are of dancing with her on the tour, and how much of a caring, professional, and hard worker she actually is. We also see excerpts of dance routines being created and rehearsed, which are always a huge element in her tours.

In another example, Beyoncé offers a more developed documentary capturing the process of her then new album, *4*,²⁰ following her creative journey from a well-needed vacation to a final meeting with A&R music execs. The rock group, Imagine Dragons, also follows the same inside view concept for the promotion of their second album, *Smoke + Mirrors*,²¹ discussing the journey they've had since the release of their debut album. Through these kinds of clips fans are able to get more personal

information about who these artists are and what projects they are working on, allowing us, the viewers, to empathize with them as normal people just like the rest of us who have good and bad days, defeats and triumphs, and successes and failures. These revelations, especially for die-hard fans, make us want to connect more with them when we see them on stage because we feel that we can relate to them more. Music artists can attract and seduce us with their creativity and songs, but short documentaries can sometimes convince us that they *are* actually just regular people.

Concerts events - When it comes to advertising the pure concert experience, which both Beyoncé²² and Taylor Swift have used,²³ it becomes clear that to reach potential ticket buyers, showing the size and energy of the live crowds at the performances is just as important as the showcasing of the artists themselves. These clips, which are from previous actual performances, show the lights, the dancing, the scenery, and of course the thousands and thousands of fans packing stadiums to see the artists. Again, I believe that this acknowledgment of the audience is an important factor in enticing the viewer who is watching from their television, computer, or phone, to want to become part of that experience: one that is festive, emotional, and thrilling. This visual display exhibits the draw of the artists and how the crowd reacts and responds to them, clearly exemplifying the power of the artist's brand to bring people together for an evening of thrills and entertainment.



Up to now, I have presented information on how the use of relatable, concrete, human relationships between advertising and viewer can have a powerful effect in attracting the consumer to a product, person or event. By focusing on personality, sports marketing has found ways to entice the public into buying their products, both

the tangible kind, and the event kind; music has found its own path by selling the performer's brand, and the excitement of the audiences. In both cases, the system of reaching the spectator seems to be situated in the belief that by offering some form of emotional connection, consumers will come to understand, connect, and relate to the performers, and as a consequence, be willing to invest in the product or event. "In an analysis of the IPA dataBANK, which contains 1,400 case studies of successful advertising campaigns, campaigns with purely emotional content performed about twice as well (31% vs. 16%) as those with only rational content (and did a little better than those that mixed emotional and rational content)."²⁴ People will seek out and buy an item at a store or online if they know the value of it in terms of their personal lives; cultural events are no different. Audiences will attend and support events if they know their experiences will be enjoyable *and* worth the money they've paid. Conversely, they will stay away from those where they may feel bad or non-engaged.

Concert dance has a sizeable problem in relating to the public, especially the non-dance population, due to the inherent abstract physical language presented within its marketing designs. With reliance on the work itself, no outlets to empathize with the performers, and omission of the viewer experience, dance advertisement become incoherent from the perspective of a public who is not skilled or open to interpreting what concert dance has to say or offer. But there is hope, as the following chapter, *What Works, and Re-designs*, will show.

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Chapter Five

CONCERT DANCE IN MEDIA: RE-DESIGNS

What matters most - both for the quality of life and for the likelihood of a repeat purchase - is satisfaction with the consumption experience itself.¹

Morris Holbrook

In a 2014 study done at North Carolina State University,² researchers focused on how people responded to lyrics in pop songs, hoping that their findings would suggest that if people reacted to certain ideas or themes in songs, the same could then be possible when marketing a product. After compiling their data, researchers stated that, “It [the study] reinforces the idea that communications centered on emotional themes will have mass audience appeal. Hit songs reflect what consumers respond to, and that’s information that advertisers can use to craft messages that will capture people’s attention.”³ In my investigation on the myriad of concert dance, sports, and music advertisements available online, and thinking about this quote above, I have noticed a shortage of compelling and persuasive dance marketing campaigns that use emotion to attract new audiences to performances. Current concert dance marketing methods predominately focus on displaying the choreographic work, hoping that viewers will be attracted enough to the physical language to then attend a performance. Unfortunately, this passive form of advertising is not conducive to generating support and interest with the non-dance public. In the article *What is Arts Marketing*, writer Doug Borwick, in support of Executive Director of Dance/USA, Amy Fitter’s earlier statement and the state of current concert dance marketing, says, “. . . [using the traditional] if we perform/exhibit it, they will come’ approach to organizational sustainability . . . is not sustainable in the real world.”⁴

Unlike in Indian culture where the *Natyashastra* has prescribed a formalization of theatrical language interpretation, artists, at least in the United States, do not have a manual for what theatrical representation of body means; as such, meaning and engagement is left up to the individual spectator. Viewers who are directly associated with the dance field (choreographers, performers, family members, and friends), may find the current assortment of advertising appealing, but for those outside of the art demographic, these abstract visuals do not necessarily capture their interest or instead fit into their lives. For most people in our society, dance is about fun and enjoyment, and yes, expression, but not the kind that concert dance speaks to.

On any given day, a multitude of dance videos and photos are posted to various social media outlets by dancers or dance organizations, and then shared with their friends and/or followers. Some are excerpts or images of both past and current dance works, while others are rehearsal clips, improvisations, or recordings of personal choreographies. However, if we delve further beyond the images, we start to notice that the styles presented within the clips and images are usually more akin to street dancing, hip-hop, break dancing, acrobatics, or social dance, rather than concert dance. I can only use my Facebook experience as an example, but a lot of my friends, especially the non-dancer ones, tend to post club, social, breakdancing, hip-hop or acrobatic/circus clips and photos on their walls, with sayings like, “That is amazing!” “I wish I could do that!” or my favorite, “*That* is dance!” Even other dance friends, art organizations, and retail businesses choose these kinds images as a way of enticing the public into watching their posts, knowing very well that hyper-physical bodies and pop-centered music will attract “hits” and attention from those surfing the web.

While showcasing any form of dance is always welcomed in our culture, by disproportionately highlighting these styles of dance, people, arts organizations, and businesses aid in propagating the notion that entertainment-based and street dance *is* what dance is, hindering the progress and visibility of concert dance within mainstream society. However, this result is not just due to the groups or businesses that share or use entertainment-based dance in their marketing; it is also the short sightedness of choreographers and dance companies who imbue their own advertisements and live works with such abstract physical and mental approaches that it alienates the non-dance public from engaging with them. For me, the dances by Joanna Kotze and Jeanine Durning created for Toronto Dance Theatre would fall under this category.

In a majority of the commercials I have watched, dancing is used as a visualization of joy and excitement, bringing people together to laugh, rejoice, and enjoy. In U.S. advertisements alone, social and commercial dance styles have become more accepted within society as a result of being used within music concerts and product commercials on television, including a 2016 Sprint ad,⁵ a series of iPods/iTunes clips from Apple,⁶ and other campaigns from Coke, Sprint, Apple, Gap, Mountain Dew, Nike, McDonalds, and State Farm, etc. All of these companies use breakdancing, hip-hop, and other social/street dances as a fun and cool way to sell their products, and most importantly, connect to their potential consumers. Breakdancing, a style that is well used in music videos and commercials, is marketed as “cool,” “hip,” and “fresh” through, various ads, cartoons and TV shows, such as Ellen.⁷ DanceSport, otherwise known as competitive ballroom, has gained widespread

popularity due to the show *Dancing With the Stars*, and is another style of dance that has been used in marketing items like banks,⁸ cough drops,⁹ and clothing.¹⁰ DanceSport, which is a large crowd attraction in many countries, has gathered more than 30,000 people to such events as the 2016 World Games in Cali, Colombia, and the 2016 World DanceSport Games in Taiwan.”¹¹ The dance genre has also gained so much popularity that it seems to be vying for a spot as an official sport for the 2020 Olympic games schedule to be held in Tokyo, Japan.¹²

In comparison, concert dance does not even come close to matching the success of these other dance styles, both in terms of audience attraction and in promotional usage. Undoubtedly, part of the reason is that concert dance, a style that is more intellectual, abstract, and introspective, is not necessarily seen by marketing agencies as a medium that can “sell” effectively to the masses. This is not to say that concert dance has never been used before. In fact, two dance companies have recently been used in ads: Momix for a 2009 Hanes commercial,¹³ and Pilobolus for a 2007 Hyundai ad,¹⁴ respectively. In both cases, their movements were presented as fun and light, relying on gymnastic or aerobic moves, not cerebral or thought provoking concepts, to amaze consumers. However, concert dance has also been presented in farcical or “artistic” manners, either by making fun of its somewhat pretentious reputation, as seen in a 2009 Cadbury Chocolate commercial,¹⁵ or as artsy, serious and stylish, as presented by a 2011 Air France ad.¹⁶

Today’s physical representation of dance, via music videos, commercials, and TV shows, reproduces dance into a certain context that anything that is not visibly connected to *that* representation is *not* considered the right kind of dance to do or be

seen by the public. To make matters more complicated, author and Professor at Georgia Institute of Technology, Philip Auslander, in his book *Liveness*, suggests that today's audiences have the expectation of seeing what they see on television to be done, or replicated on the real stage: “. . . if television once could be seen as ranking among a number of vehicles for conveying expression or information from which we could choose, we no longer have that choice: the televisual has become the intrinsic and determining element of our cultural formation.”¹⁷ What Auslander means by this is that television has surpassed its original identity as a mirror to society, to now becoming what defines what society and culture should be. It is no longer just a reflection of culture: it creates it.

The televisual of dance is seen as fun, sexy, urban, physical, and melodramatic, not pensive, political, emotive, or serious. As Frenchman Étienne Bonnot de Condillac observed centuries before:

“As [society's] taste improved . . . dancing was naturally divided into two subordinate arts . . . one of them was the ‘dance of gestures,’ which was maintained for its contribution to the communication of their thoughts; the other was chiefly the ‘dance of steps’, which was used for the expression of certain states of mind, especially joy; it was used on occasion of rejoicing, pleasure being its principal aim.”¹⁸

With the division of dance into two separate camps, it is no wonder societies generally gravitated more towards the social aspects of the form, due to its important societal and cultural roles, “. . . in matters of celebration, courtship, recreation, and entertainment.”¹⁹ These social dance forms allow for a sense of escape from the day-to-day drudgery that life can bring, while concert dance can sometimes remind us of our problems and issues, making it seem too intense and serious.

In researching commercials, trailers, photos, and other promo items, I came across an interesting YouTube video that, I believe, helps sum up the general attitude of many people towards concert dance.²⁰ In this clip we are introduced to Kyla Sweet, a young woman, possibly in her mid 20's, who is being interviewed by a friend about why she hates modern dance, *but* loves basketball. Her reasons, which any modern choreographer or dancer would most likely take offense to, are actually valid points that support a few of my thesis arguments I have presented thus far. She states: 1) it is a form of expression that is limited in what it can express; 2) no matter what a dancer does, they look pretentious; and finally, 3) dancing should be social, not, “. . . observed from a polite distance”²¹ or, “. . . removed from the subject [and action].”²² In contrast, when asked about why she loves to watch basketball, she explains that: 1) there is a specific goal for the physical motivations of the athletes: run fast and get a ball through the net; 2) the players are not there to impress the crowds or express any worldly idea; 3) the players are there to simply play and win a game, and lastly; 4) the audience can engage with the game.

While I am sure that many dance artists would love to debate her on her thoughts, she does reveal something at the close of her interview, which to me, is quite poignant and related to my investigation: that modern dance tries to reach the audience through the mind, while other forms of entertainment aim for the gut. This statement, I feel, really expresses the core of why a great number of non-dance audiences feel left out when watching dance on screen or attending concert dance performances: concert dance *thinks* too much.

Fortunately, the situation is not all dire, as there are some new campaigns that

are challenging the status quo of dance marketing by emotionally connecting with what and who they see on the screen, and giving viewers a chance to see concert dance in a different light.

What Is Working

All of my research has been pointing towards the idea of letting go of the actual choreography, and focusing more on a human approach in order to get viewers to relate more to dance advertising. This notion of emotion is currently being put to use most notably with the hugely successful Under Armour ad featuring American Ballet Principal Dancer, Misty Copeland.²³ This commercial, which according to a YouTube video counter has amassed over 10 million views since its debut in early 2015, presents Copeland as the latest spokesperson for Under Armour's newest female workout clothing line. As the ad begins, a young girl's voice narrates what sounds like a rejection letter Copeland received from a ballet school when she was 13 years old, while she (Copeland) slowly rises onto her point shoes wearing a matching sport brief and top. According to the letter, she is rejected because she has the wrong body for a ballet dancer. However, the sheer contrast of her physical, athletic body, and the judgment in the letter, make the viewer feel empathy for Copeland, as many people have had to deal with rejection due to their bodies in their own lives. The ad then moves to a stage where Copeland, in the same clothing as before, is seen turning and jumping, showing off her impressive technical abilities and physique. She dances with an air of confidence and triumph, effectively silencing the naysayers who rejected her abilities many years ago. Her portrayal goes along with the theme of Under Armour's campaign, *I Will What I Want*, which is about fighting for what you

want and believe in, which in this case is dance. Of importance is that the choreography shown is not the focus of the ad, but just an element of who Copeland is; and this fits in with other campaigns from Under Armour. Motivation is key, and is used as the driving force to capture the public's attention to what a ballet dancer goes through: "Her story of perseverance through poverty, racism and overcoming setbacks from injury have been key to connecting her to the Under Armour customer, who values the underdog,"²⁴ writes Margaret Sutherlin in her article "Misty Copeland Opens Up About Under Armour, Ballet & Her New Principal Dancer Role." Her human presence invites the viewer to see her as someone who has had to work hard against the odds: as a dancer, as an athlete, and as a person.

Another new style to dance ads is done by the well-known American ballet company, the New York City Ballet (NYCB). In a promotion trailer for their 2015 performance of *La Sylphide*,²⁵ NYCB took a very filmic approach to how they advertised the work. Instead of the using the traditional format of showing excerpts of the choreography from past performances, the company chose to bypass any dancing and concentrated on the dramatic element in the ballet:

"A sleeping man's face is seen in shadowy closeup. He wakes suddenly; a woman is in the room, her long hair blowing in the wind. She disappears, and he rushes to the window, pushing aside the curtains to look for her. The camera scans the room: a desk, a mirror. A door slams shut: the closet? He rifles through the clothes, pushes through the back of the closet, then, with explosive force and a blackout, he's lying on the ground outside. He gets up and heads toward some bare woods at the edge of the field, tentatively at first, then breaking into a run."²⁶

As any good film trailer would do, this clip gives just enough story and dramatic tension to entice the viewer to want to see more; and this was accomplished without

showing any dance at all, just the natural drama that exists when anyone tries to find someone who interests them. Dance critic, teacher, and author Marcia B. Siegel wrote in her article, *Old Ballet/New Ballet*, that, “. . . the *La Sylphide* trailer [was] part of an NYCB campaign to attract young audiences. All these films and images are about “real” fantasies and take place in ordinary settings: a beach, a parking lot, a dance studio, a clearing in the woods. They’re not the same as ballet fantasies.” Again, this video is an example of how taking out the abstract physical language of dance, and working with the inherent drama that can be found in the work, permits the trailer to succeed in relating to the viewer.

In contrast, Colorado Ballet, with their promo for the same ballet, is not as effective in persuading the non-dance spectator to want to see more of it due to its reliance on movement.²⁷ In actuality, the ad shows nothing to the viewer besides the three main characters, dressed in costumes, and performing some steps during a photo shoot. Other than that, it fails to give a clue as to what the actual intent of the video is about: is it for the ballet company? Is it for the photographer? Is it for the theater space? Whatever the case may be, it shows too many things, yet unfortunately, shows nothing at all.

With a good handle on what is used in marketing dance, it starts to become clear that designs created with an approach to the lives of ordinary people, will have a stronger impact on their relationship with the viewed product. So even though there is power in the ability of dance to share ideas and thoughts, it is not so clear in the way dance creators market it: “. . . the emotional process [for the consumer] begins when some message, object, or event triggers a cognitive appraisal that results in an

evaluation mediated by beliefs and shaped by personal values.” In other words, direct relation to the advertised product is demonstrated by the individual’s perception of what that product’s perceived value is to them. Concert dance needs to present its *value*, not its *tricks*.

NOTES

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CONCLUSION

The basic definition of modern dance that most people agree on, or concert dance as I have been referring to within this thesis, is that it is a physical art form whose language is self-generated and self-motivated, and with meaning open to vast interpretations and speculations. Its gestures are derived from the individual choreographer's personal idiosyncrasies, and not from a predetermined set of codified steps, such as ballet. Specific meanings are sometimes vague and futile as most choreographers are more interested in what the viewer may take away from the performances than prescribing actual meanings to their dances. Ironically, with this extreme amount of liberty given to audiences in what relate and understand the form, this openness is what also creates insecurity and apprehension, prompting most people to stay away from it for sake of "getting it wrong." Nora Younkin, a freelance journalist writes in her article *What the Heck Is Postmodern Dance?* "Sometimes it would seem audiences are afraid of modern dance because it's not evident what it's about, or what you're supposed to get walking away from it."¹

Choreographers believe that dance, like other art forms, is a medium that has the potential to shed light on important social, political, and human issues, initiating valuable shared discourse with the public on what these agendas may mean to us as a people. Professional psychologist and independent writer Michael Watts, in his analysis of seminal German philosopher Martin Heidegger's theories on art states, "A truly artistic outlook on life allows us a more fundamental, *direct experience* of things, which can create a genuinely caring, authentic way of living that is in complete contrast to the destructive technological approach to existence that is

prevalent today.”² Dance, just as the art that Heidegger writes about in his theories, has the power to illuminate hidden truths to the public, expressing possible realities that they may have never thought of or considered beforehand. It is through these silent dialogues that we, as dance artists, can begin to connect with what the viewer sees and feels.

However, as I have argued throughout these past chapters, the belief that abstract movement language can transmit ideas and feelings from the moving body to the viewing body without incorporating a sense of emotionality is not 100% accurate. With varied life experiences, different social constructs, incomprehensible digital marketing, and non-relatable live performance experiences, audiences (especially the non-dance segment) can experience difficulty relating to concert dance actions, whether on stage or screen, that bypass this important element of human communication. While it may be true that each one of us has the capacity to enjoy, participate, and perform dance, this does not mean that we all move, think, see or understand movement in the same ways. Philosopher John Locke, in speaking to his theory concerning the use of language, offers a quote that I would like to apply to how we (as artists and as a public) engage with movement, especially the kind presented in concert dance. He states:

“ . . . [when] people use words, they always represent the ideas the person speaking has in his or her head, which are not necessarily the same as the ideas associated with those words in the mind of the person listening. Language is such that people generally assume they mean the same thing when they use a particular word and, further, ‘often suppose their words to stand also for the reality of things.’”³

The reason I have noted this statement from Locke is that when it comes to

concert dance marketing, choreographers and designers are accustomed to creating advertising that is specifically crafted for the dance world, without much intent on reaching audiences outside of the art form. The presentation of body within videos and photos, as well as in the live performance, allows the dance “insider” to marvel at the athleticism of the performer and the texture of the movements; but for someone who is not invested or open to seeing concert dance, these visuals only serve to intensify the mystery and misconception of concert dance, raising questions about what is actually being shown and why they should go see it. As Jill Johnston surmised in her writings, *a body is a body*, and if the viewer cannot connect to what they see on that simple level, then any type of communicative advertising approach will face challenges in engaging the spectator. A body having fun or showing off, as is the case with commercial and social dances presented in TV ads or in movies, relates more to viewers as they are perceived to be more connected to their lives; or in other words, more enjoyable. A concert dance body can be seen as athletic, but the images crafted by its own advertising make it come across as sad or pensive, which are not feelings that will excite people or make them want to go see live performances.

In stating this, I am not advocating a whitewashing in the marketing of choreographic works, of presenting happy ideas just to appease the public. Rather I am simply acknowledging that sole reliance on the abstract physicality of dance to transmit complicated social or personal ideas to spectators can be off putting for those who are not able to relate to what is being presented or sold to them. The physically demanding choreography, the trendy music, the outrageous costumes, and the sheer physical beauty of the dancers, are all trimmings that can certainly catch attention, but

for whom? These elements are fine for other dancers and choreographers, as it helps communicate new and novel artistic endeavors taking place within; however, if dance artists are truly interested in reaching beyond the small percentage of audiences that attend dance concerts, then these components are not at the core of how an average, non-dance person will engage with art.

At the 2014 Creative Culture Exchange Conference held at the University of Dayton, which was comprised of a series of events bringing local and national artists together to discuss ways to grow an appreciation for art among audiences both new and old, one local visual artist, James Pate, made an interesting remark during a talk back session: “People [today] are not manufactured to appreciate the arts, especially dance.”⁴ While his statement is valid and truthful, arts education, which does allow people to see and experience a wide scope of art, is only part of the solution in gaining inroads with the public. Education of the artists, in this case dance artists, geared towards exploring the manners in which they foster the link between the viewer, artistic work, and performer, must also be taught and nurtured. It is no longer enough to just learn about the techniques of their crafts; young choreographers and dancers must be aware of how to connect to audiences who will hopefully become future patrons of their works.

But in order to create change, there must be change in the way dance presents itself on stage and on screen. Australian choreographer, and Doctor of Philosophy, Dr. Clare Dyson, states in her 2009 essay *The ‘Authentic Dancer’ as a Tool for Audience Engagement*:

“ . . . most contemporary dance works throughout the world are currently created for, and then presented within, the traditional

presentation dance paradigm: seated or fixed 'passive' audience, a proscenium/single front theatre with a separation between audience and performer, limited or no audience agency, 60-90 minutes in length and created tour-ready for equivalent theatrical architecture of this paradigm."⁵

What Dr. Dyson argues here is that current ideas and designs of theatrical presentation (and these are components that are taught over and over again in many dance programs across the country) do not allow audiences to, “. . . [experience] dance ‘with all one’s faculties,’”⁶ or, “. . . privilege the experiential, except from a single viewing point.”⁷ Even though she is commenting on the live performance experience of an audience, Dr. Dyson’s perspective can also be directed at how concert dance presents itself to the viewer within its own marketing platforms.



Concert dance, which is abstract and non-traditional in terms of storytelling, must go beyond the sole display of choreographic skill and intent in both online campaigns and live performances if it strives to persuade the public to take notice of it, thereby creating a stronger support system that enables its artists to be better financially compensated. If there were more instances of infusing a sense of humanity and realness within video and photo promotions, such as current commercials with ABT’s Misty Copeland display, then artists could begin to develop a deeper connection with the general public that becomes based on emotional interest as opposed to physical prowess. As Morris Holbrook states, “. . . the reemerging attention to emotion in advertising places enormous demands on the marketing researcher to shift gears, to relinquish decade-long habits shaped by the decision-oriented model, and to develop revised approaches designed to answer questions

about how advertising can help fit consumer products into the overall consumption experience.”⁸

British choreographer Lloyd Newson understood very well that concert dance movement by itself had limits in expressing meaning, which is why he began incorporating spoken language, politics, and drama into his works, inevitably making the dancers more human to his audiences. This approach, however, was not always present in his early marketing designs. While his last promotional video for DV8 in 2015⁹ had him speak to what the company’s work was about, this was not an approach used in his earlier trailers: it was a learned tactic that came after many years of working in the abstract, and of letting the dances speak for themselves. He, like Holbrook has suggested, relinquished the norm, and found a new way to engage the viewer.

As previously discussed, sports and music marketing have successfully enabled the general public to embrace and welcome both their events and advertisements into their homes, granting them the ability to understand, enjoy, and empathize with who and what they see. By contrary, choreographers, dance presenters and dance producers, limit their reach by only thinking about the choreographic work, leaving the important attribute of audience emotion and connection left on the cutting room floor. Paraphrasing a thought expert Graeme Newell explained in his marketing training video, *Current Marketing Trends: Getting Away From Brand Narcissism*:¹⁰ choreographers need to get over themselves. The consumer does not care about the amount of work a company has gone through to create or develop their dance or advertisement; what they do care about is how the item, or show, or event, relates to

them and their lives. The public engages with advertisements that they consider a match to various aspects of their life, whether for practical items or social events; and as far as my research concludes, dance does not take that into account.



If anything can be taken away from what has been presented within this thesis, is that emotional marketing and advertisements *do* play significant roles in conveying pertinent product information to viewers, and that dance should look to incorporating this tactic that is ever present in sports and music marketing in its promotion of shows, presentations, and tours. Why is it that travel agencies always show happy couples running down an empty beach, or having drinks overlooking the sea, or enjoying the nightlife at some club or bar? Or why does the new DNA history ad campaign that has hit social media by the travel search engine, Momondo,¹¹ strategically show closes ups of peoples faces as they react to the information they receive? Because these companies (and others) understand that attracting consumers to their products through the use of transportation (empathy) enables spectators to relate with what and whom they see, which increases the probability of turning that outside passive viewer into an actual customer who purchases their product or attends their events. If dance artists really want to have more support from society, including more audiences, and ultimately more financial stability, then it is up to the artists themselves to go beyond the simple display of choreography, and actually humanize their approaches, targeting spectator feelings directly through a tangible, empathetic human lens, and not an abstracted dancer viewpoint.

As artists, we are fortunate to have a wide variety of opportunities to share our life views with the public at large. We invent and create new worlds out of bodies,

canvas, and musical notes, each supporting our visions of inner emotions, political ideals, or pure fantasy. We spend days, weeks, and sometimes even years, investigating, creating, nurturing, throwing away and re-creating ideas that, when all the pieces finally align, show a part of ourselves, and a glimpse of our personal reflection on the world to outside eyes. However, we must also acknowledge that no one person, in attending a performance, or viewing a trailer, or looking at a photos, will ever completely understand 100% of an artwork or of our creative intentions.

Audiences will be attracted to a wide variety of different characteristics or aspects of art, perceiving them in their own particular ways due to such factors as social standing, upbringing, culture, gender, ethnicity or religion. Some might lean towards the provocative work of Marina Abramović, citing it as the pinnacle in performance art, while others might choose to groove to Madonna or Lady Gaga, basking in the frivolity and fun of their music and ever-changing images. Some artists (specifically non-popular culture artists working in theater, music and dance) address the challenges of audience connection by specifically creating works that attract larger scopes of audiences, either by producing art that is “easier to understand,” or by exploring the latest trends in design and technology. Others proceed in the opposite direction, holding on to their core artistic values and goals, and explicitly constructing works that only identify with a more selective group of patrons. Both ventures however, though completely valid and satisfying, will never provide an easy path in securing artistic, financial or public support unless the artist acknowledges that how the work is viewed or received is only the final part of the issue concerning the public and the arts; artists must rethink the way they promote their work if they

are to make any progress in reaching past a select few patrons.

Advertising is a vital piece of the communication puzzle for dance in stating who, what, where, and when, but it cannot make concert dance into something that people will “buy” if the core premise of the product is not understood, relatable, or appreciated by the greater non-dance population. An engaging dialogue is needed, one that begins with a coming to terms of what *we* want from audiences, and what *audiences* want from us. Due to the ever-changing voice of media, viewers expect different things now than during the times of the Greeks and the Romans, and the abstracted exposé of a concert dance body as a promotional tool cannot engage the public as highly compared to the barrage of body images they are presented every day from commercial and entertainment dance.

My motivation in writing this thesis, which has investigated how audience experience and relationship to movement can become a stronger source for the development of new marketing strategies for concert dance, is to challenge dance artists to think beyond their own creative works, and dig deep in examining how representation, both in digital formats and on stage, can actually aid in helping their creations resonate and connect more with spectators. In doing these “self-investigations,” choreographers, dance companies, and organizations may begin to understand how effectively engaging in genuine conversations with their patrons, not just a “here it is” attitude, may uncover and develop new ideas and solutions that can foster change in the public’s perception of what concert dance is and what it offers. Sports and music marketing know that they have to connect with their intended audience on a gut level if they are to encourage people to attend games or concerts, so

why are we, in dance, reluctant or slow to grasp this same concept?

NOTES

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⁷ *Ibid.* 2

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¹⁰ Graeme Newell, “Current Marketing Trends: Getting Away From Brand Narcissism,” video, 4:10, November 10, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfxRgp4Dw3Y>.

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