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Art Irritates Life...And Vice Versa

An exploration of the nature of dance and its effect on the psychological well-being of ballet and contemporary dancers.

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Bachelor of Arts Honours (Dance)

23rd April 2003

Abstract

Research into the psychology of theatrical dancers has indicated that as a group, dancers may be a high-risk population for psychological disorders. The majority of this research however, has only sampled ballet dancers. In consideration of the fact that contemporary dance is philosophically and aesthetically different from ballet, it is proposed that the experience of contemporary dancers may be different from that of ballet dancers and thus their psychological experience and potential problems may also be different. It is suggested, therefore, that results from studies on ballet dancers may not generalize to contemporary dancers. In support of this proposition, the purpose of this study is to explore the notion that there is a difference in the psychological distress, potentially experienced by ballet dancers compared to contemporary dancers.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

i. incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

ii. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

iii. contain any defamatory material.

Signed..... [redacted] .....Veronica Shum

Date.....23/4/03.....

Acknowledgments

Thank you to...

Dr. Maggi Phillips
My family
Michal
Dr Lynne Cohen
Pamela McNeil
Lucinda Sharp
Paulette Mifsud
Nanette Hassall
Justin Rutzuo
Mark Brinkley
Sally Collard Gentle and the AIT Performing Arts 2nd year (2002), Bachelor of Dance Performance students
The 2nd year (2002), WAAPA Associate Diploma in Dance students
Cheryl Stock and the QUT 2nd year (2002) Bachelor of Fine Arts (Dance) and Associate Degree in Dance students
Jenny Kinder and the VCA 2nd year (2002) Bachelor of Dance students
Maggi Sietsma
Garry Stewart
Aidan Munn
Alissa Bruce
Tim Rogers
Brett Morgan and all the dancers at Sydney Dance Company who participated in the Professional Dancer Survey
Danielle Brady
Andrew Rusk
Naïda Chinner
Katrina Lazaroff
Rachel Manik
Ingrid Kleinig
Amelia McQueen
Bridget Fiske
Joseph Lau
Geoff Ryan

Introduction

I remember my ballet teacher telling us to pretend our ribs were bound together flat across our chest with very fine stitches that would break if we allowed them to poke out when we danced. We diligently endeavoured to meet this requirement, although I do not recall ever asking why is was so important that the stitches on my ribs remained intact. Perhaps I assumed stitched ribs had something to do with other instructions like "Tummies in. I don't want to see what you had for afternoon tea, it doesn't look nice".

For me, an individual of system and logic, the request for flat ribs may have made more sense had the teacher attempted to explain how greater mechanical efficiency and safer use of the body can be achieved by working in the correct postural alignment. She did not take this approach and subsequently, it was only during the first year of my tertiary dance training (after 15 years of ballet classes), that I found the correct muscles in my buttocks (the deep rotators) that should be engaged to externally rotate the legs. However, I do not reproach my teacher for not explaining. A ten-year-old possibly does not have the capacity to understand the finer points of anatomy and bio-mechanics. Hence, the instruction "No bum! Tight bottoms!" resulting in the clenching of every muscle in my buttocks to maintain 'turn out' and the 'no bum' appearance, had to suffice.

While engagement of specific body parts for anatomical safety and bio-mechanical efficiency makes sense, it has plagued me ever since the second and third year Critical Studies unit of my dance course, what it is specifically, that makes a good dancer or a good dance work, apart from what teachers say is right/good/nice.

Three of my dance contemporaries and I have a performance group, a germ of an idea in first year, which we nurtured into a professionally functioning group after graduating. Turned loose into the uncontrolled world of the independent dance scene, professional life has been a riveting ride of grant applications, fundraising, juggling other employment, marketing, publicity, public liability insurance, costume, lighting, sound, venues, maintenance of dance technique and least of all creating the actual dance works. However, when you consider that a work's creative process, is ultimately a projection of yourself on some level, these elements all have a bearing on the finished product. The programme notes from one of our works acknowledges such influences: "Its foundations lie in choreographic workshops based on memories, the concept of attachment and a lot of caffeine" (*Smother's Love* programme notes, 2002).

Our most recent work was born of the most haphazard creative and rehearsal process to date and while I admit to being something of a 'control freak', this process was seriously flawed. As is often the case with independent work, however, it probably had to have been that way or not at all. Such is life when dance cannot be the sole focus and the sole source of income.

As there was little direct information relating to this kind of experience in dancers, three questionnaires were constructed to facilitate discussion about the thesis question. Separate questionnaires were constructed to explore the attitudes of tertiary dance students and professional dancers towards ballet and contemporary dance and the third questionnaire was intended to discover the occurrence and effect of various stressors[1] that appear to be a part of a career in dance. The results of these surveys can be found in the Appendices and it is suggested that they be briefly perused before continuing through the rest of the thesis.

The term 'artistic anxiety' will be defined at a later point in the discussion rather than here, as the researcher feels it is necessary to first put the wider area of theatrical dance (in this discussion, only classical ballet and contemporary dance) in context, with reference to the kind of stressors that may be encountered by student and professional dancers.

Similarly, classical ballet and contemporary dance will be more thoroughly defined through each genre's individual section. Aside from stating that both genres are forms of theatrical dance[2], it is difficult to further define either genre without drawing on lengthy historical and socio-cultural details.

Briefly, for clarification, the term 'ballet' has its origins in Renaissance Europe, specifically Italy. It was not until ballet's appropriation and evolution by the French nobility, that it became known as 'classical ballet' and took the form from which today's classical ballet has developed. In this discussion however, due to the word limit and to facilitate flow of writing, classical ballet shall furthermore be referred to as 'ballet'.

Throughout the discussion the terms contemporary dance and modern dance are used interchangeably. In Australia, the terms 'modern' and 'contemporary' are both used in reference to this form of dance, though from personal experience 'contemporary' is used more frequently. Support for the interchangeability of these two terms has not been found, however, considering that the majority of resources and research cited in the discussion originate from Europe or America, where 'modern' is the favoured term, modern and contemporary dance will refer to the same dance genre throughout this discussion.

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[1] **Stressor- 1.** Generally, any force that when applied to a system causes some significant modification of its form...the term stressor is typically used to refer to the causal agent (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 716). **2.** Events or situations to which people must adjust (Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 350).

[2] Theatrical dance is dance created and danced with the primary intention of being viewed by others, as opposed to social dancing or dance for ritual or spiritual/religious purposes. (after Jonas, 1992)

Psychologically, dancers may encounter performance anxiety and motivational problems due to perceived lack of achievement and negativity, which may be a bi-product of other stressors (e.g. injury), or caused by the teaching/directing attitudes of lecturers/choreographers. Negativity may manifest as self doubt, mind games, poor confidence and pessimism. Some, interviewees reported experiencing some of these conditions to the point of physical symptoms which included, sleep and appetite disturbances, vomiting, diarrhoea, excessive sweating and shaking. "Once I just didn't turn up for a show, a promo for an actual season. [I] Felt so insecure that I just couldn't perform that day. [I] Ended up pulling out of the whole show" (Dance Career Stressors Survey). Many interviewees reported these conditions were triggered by choreographers or directors, but became self-perpetuating.

> Mind games that you play on yourself, self-doubt, fear that someone will soon find out it is all a big scam.
>
> [I] play mind games with myself. I do this 'cos I have very high expectations of myself. [There is] comparison with others, seeing qualities in others that I'm not up to scratch with. I read a lot into off hand comment, especially negative ones, but if they're good I think they're just being nice.
>
> (Dance Career Stressors Survey)

On a personal level, dancers may have to contend with dissatisfaction about their career choice from loved ones. A dancer's family may worry about dance not being a stable/respectable career (*"When are you going to get a real job?"),* and the demands of a dance career, can create disharmony within intimate relationships. Dance can be a nomadic profession, with dancers travelling to where the work is and therefore having to maintain long distance relationships. Additionally, success in a dance career depends on the dancer possessing a single mindedness of purpose, which others (partners included) may perceive as selfishness and self-absorption. Dancers may often be too tired, sore or injured to give their partner their full attention, participate in social activities or engage in sexual interaction. Indeed, the career may be so consuming as to evoke destructive jealousy and the possibility of having to choose between a steady, committed relationship and dancing, is quite real.

> Long distance relationships have been caused by dance choices and that has caused a lot of pain and frustration. [It] Has caused a couple of break ups too. [I've] Been quite obsessive and maybe selfish with regard to dance so that has caused problems at times. [I] Haven't wanted to compromise too much, been willing to sacrifice my relationships for dance. I think I don't have long to dance, but have a whole lifetime to have relationships. Also being too tired physically to participate in other relationship things...(Dance Career Stressors Survey).

Lastly, although perhaps not as obvious as other stressors, are the potential socio-cultural negatives of being a dancer. Dancers in Australia, possibly more than in Europe or North America, where dance is more culturally embedded, invariably encounter the opposition and effects of incorrect stereotypes and social perceptions about dancers. These perceptions derive from a general lack of knowledge and understanding about the nature of dance and of being a dancer. Common misperceptions include; performing artists are not really skilled, dance not being a real job, dancers are viewed as unintelligent and were not suited to any other career. Such misperceptions do nothing to aid a dancer's dealings with government agencies such as Centrelink, where treatment quite often suggests dancers are considered to be 'dole bludgers'. The experience of one dance interviewee highlight's this misperception. "[At Centrelink], the lady said to me, we need to figure out what your career is going to be. Hello! I have a degree in dance!" (Dance Career Stressors Survey). The frequency of this experience and the general attitude of welfare bodies was one of the main topics of discussion at the recent ArtsHub Australia Agenda '03, *Dole for Arts.*

> A common theme...at the forum was the unhelpful and unbending nature of welfare authorities. Although it was noted that artists...are hardly alone in being swiftly ushered off the dole queue into the next job going (regardless of what it is), they are often singled out for the particular humiliation of being told that their occupation is not legitimate: that their art constitutes no more than a 'hobby'. As one half of Melbourne emerging artist duo 'Nat and Ali', Starr-Thomas told of having to contend with a demeaning and ever-increasing paper trail in order to satisfy Centrelink authorities, having to attend a week-long training course on 'how to get a job' in the midst of creating and installing work for the Next Wave Festival and having still to make job application targets while working full-time for a month prior to a spot in the Museum of Contemporary Art's high-profile *Primavera* show...(Meehan, 2003).

The results of an American study "a preliminary investigation of the actor and the dancer under the mantle of the psychological study of creativity" (Reciniello in Wilson, 1991, p. 104), support the notion of such a societal attitude towards dancers. As expressed by dancers in Australia, "the majority of performers believed society's view of the performer was unrealistic, inaccurate, negative or at best ambivalent" (ibid p. 109).

> We are the muses. We are a fantasy. Risk-takers. Sluts. Thoroughbreds. We have beautiful bodies. We are a frill in life. Entertainment on Saturday nights.

> I think society thinks much like my mother and father. They have a hard time explaining what I do. It produces no product, pays meagrely and wears people out and down at an early age. It is a nice hobby, but nothing to be taken seriously. Why should dancers be paid since they like their work so much?
>
> (Answers from two participants in Reciniello's study, in response to a question asking them about society's perception of dancers, p. 115 & 116).

The general lack of knowledge and understanding about dance and dancers has probably also contributed to dancers not receiving the most appropriate and specifically tailored injury treatment. One comparative study (Schafle, Requa & Garrick in Solomon, Minton & Solomon, 1990) into the injury patterns of ballet, modern and aerobic dancers suggests that the smaller incidence of lower leg injuries in modern dancers may be due to the "slightly less repetitive and routinized nature of the movements in modern dance" (ibid p. 12). However, Schafle et al. also suggested this apparent lower incidence may not be the result of fewer lower leg injuries, but rather the result of dancers failing to seek treatment for fear of the response of practitioners.

> Modern dancers may also feel somewhat unappreciated and misunderstood by the traditional medical community due to the relative lack of acquaintance that most physicians have with modern dance as compared with ballet (ibid p. 12).

These sentiments are echoed by Kerr, Krasnow & Mainwaring (1992). Their study into the nature of dance injuries found that 80% of dance injuries were not reported to a physician because the dancers "perceived that their situations and injuries would not be understood, and that they would be told to stop dancing regardless of the severity of the injury" (p. 110).

While the last 15 years have seen vast progress in the specific treatment of dance injuries in Australia, dancers still report being less than satisfied with treatment received from health care professionals (Dance Career Stressors Survey). The main discrepancy reported, concerned the feeling that health care professionals lacked the necessary knowledge about dancing and dance training to accurately diagnose injuries and to prescribe treatment and rehabilitation. Dancers also felt their practitioners lacked the knowledge about dancers and their motivations to be appropriately empathic and sensitive to their condition and to understand the impact of injury on the dancer. One dancer felt the implication from her practitioner was that, as she was injured, she should simply find another career (Dance Career Stressors Survey). Such advice is anything but therapeutic and merely serves to intensify the dancer's anxiety concerning the injury and its ramifications for the future.

Such a list of potential stressors paints a bleak picture of a dance career and provokes the question as to why anyone would consider pursuing such a path, or how one could maintain the passion and drive to continue.

Is dance a more difficult career to pursue than any other? Consideration reveals the stressors described do not appear to be isolated to a career in dance[3]. Aside from the grueling physicality of dance, there is no reason why the potential for mental/emotional trauma would be any greater or different than in any other vocation, if the individual is passionate and ambitious in their career. Indeed, the potential for mental/emotional trauma would be high in vocations where failure comes at a high cost (e.g. doctors, fire fighters and the police force). It is equally possible in other vocations for individuals to experience psychological trauma from pressure exerted by superiors, or for long working hours and job requirements to separate partners on a regular basis. Indeed, professional athletes and sports people could empathize with dancers about the mental and emotional toll taken by chronic fatigue and worry about injury.

Additionally, comparing vocations in terms of the most potentially traumatic would be impossible due to individual differences between people. Psychological theory states that it is impossible to generalize about behaviour and its causes across individuals and across the different contexts in which the behaviour arises, because everyone is unique and may not necessarily behave consistently under controlled circumstances. Tolerance of and response to a stressor[4] depends on several mediating factors, namely: predictability (the extent to which people can predict their stressors, and prepare for them), control (the extent to which people can control their stressors), cognitive appraisal (how a person thinks about and interprets the stressor. Is this a threat or a challenge?), coping resources and methods (the methods employed to cope with a stressor and the availability of resources, for example financial resources to facilitate coping methods), and social support (the availability of friends/family to offer support and empathy) (after Bernstein & Nash, 2002). Varying levels of these factors between people and situations causes variability in the stress response, irrespective of the particular rigours of a specific job.

For example, an individual may have a job that is highly unpredictable and uncontrollable, but because they see the job as a challenge and have good coping skills they do not have a negative stress response[5]. By comparison, a person may have a job that is predictable and controlled, but because they have poor coping methods and view every mishap as a major threat they do experience a negative stress response which could eventually manifest as a

---

[3] Although it is challenging to find another vocation containing ALL the potential stressors identified in a dance career.

[4] **Stress response** – The physical, psychological (emotional and cognitive) and behavioural responses to stressors (Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 350).

[5] In everyday use, stress in the 'effect' sense (stress response/reaction), inaccurately, tends to have a negative connotation. A stress response is neutral, but can be categorised as negative or positive depending on the nature and intensity of the stressor, the mediating factors already mentioned and other environmental/circumstantial factors. A negative stress response involves excessive persistent symptoms to the point where normal functioning is impaired, and can lead to a psychological condition. A positive stress response involves finding the stressor a motivating and stimulating force, which pushes the individual to strive and excel.

psychological condition. Due to the variability of mediating factors between individuals, it is probably impossible to ascertain if one vocation is likely to cause more mental or emotional trauma than another.

The stressors discussed are not dance specific, but perhaps a reason why their effect is magnified in a dance career lies in the motivations for choosing this career path and the nature of the vocation.

Some people choose careers because they love them, while others take on jobs simply to make money to afford the life they desire and to have financial security. The majority of dancers do not make much money. Even dancers in companies, on average, make only between $27, 254 and $35, 616 per annum[6], and only if they are contracted for the full 48 weeks of a standard working year. As a point of comparison, a full time secretary's wage ranges from $16, 959 per annum for a low skill level 17 year old or under, to $41, 296 per annum for a very senior, experienced secretary. An average adult secretary earns approximately $30,000 per annum[7]. The primary reason for pursuing dance as a career is not financial gain or financial security; rather the motivation is personal fulfillment. Responses to the question, 'why did you choose to pursue a career in dance?' illustrate this point eloquently. "Dance was something I had to do everyday to feel satisfied, the sheer joy of moving my body, finding the freedom through movement" (Dance Career Stressors Survey).

Mihaly Csikszentmihaly has been studying the psychology of happiness for thirty years, specifically in his words, "those optimal moments which make the rest of life worth living" (Csikszentmihaly, 1999, p. 6). His initial interest motivated him to complete his doctoral thesis on the subject of creativity based on the notion that studying those who create something out of nothing may yield the secret of creating a life worth living. The results of his research give further insight into the motivations behind choosing a career in dance.

> One of the things that really struck me when I observed the visual artists' performances was how they would begin with a blank canvas and slowly get involved with the process of painting; within an hour, they would be so taken by the activity that if you talked to them, they wouldn't hear you...And yet, what was so fascinating was that as soon as the painting was finished they looked at it, said, "Not bad," put it against the wall and forgot about it. All they wanted was to start a new canvas.
> At that time, psychologists assumed that you expend energy in order to get a product that you use or exchange or consume. But this is not what happened with these artists.

[6] Based on MEAA award rates for weekly engagement of dancers in a company from Level 1 through to Level 7 – www.alliance.org.au/equity/dancecompany.pdf

[7] Based on rates as outlined in the South Australian public sector salary award - Administrative services stream.

> They were not painting in order to have a painting; in many ways the finished canvas was only an excuse so that they could paint (Csikszentmihaly, 1999, p.6).

Csikszentmihaly proceeds to recount that further interviews with other people in the arts revealed a similar experience and a similar pleasure gained purely from the act of doing. His interviews with dancers concluded just that; dancers dance for the simple fact that they love to dance, dance fulfills them, dance creates those optimal moments.

If it is passion for the art form and a desire for personal fulfillment and expression that motivates individuals to take up dance as their career, then it follows that it will never be just a '9 – 5 job' from which one can easily and conveniently distance oneself. The likelihood of such an intense bond with the 'job' is strengthened by two observations. Firstly, dancers, for the most part, have danced for longer than they could read and write, possibly to the exclusion of fully developing other interests, and therefore, being a dancer is a large component of the individual's identity. This point is highlighted by Mainwaring, Krasnow & Kerr (2001), who propose avoidance of the "disruption of self", as one reason for dancers continuing to dance, against recommendation, when injured. Secondly, this identification is further strengthened by the fact that the instrument of dancing is the body, which makes leaving one's work at the 'office' impossible.

The connection with the 'job' will always be emotionally charged, yet, it is probably also this all-consuming nature of the vocation that yields the fulfillment and the complete engagement of the individual's mind, body and soul. It is also this complete absorption that renders the individual mentally and emotionally vulnerable when things go wrong, or are perceived to have gone wrong. There is no 'buffer zone' of satisfactory financial compensation to cushion the effect of a demoralizing day in rehearsal with an irate choreographer. The emotional openness that permits such complete fulfillment and satisfaction cannot be simply turned off or converted to apathy, when injury occurs. Instead the emotion inherent in this depth of engagement may magnify the tragedy. It is because the dancer cares about their vocation on such a deeply personal level, that the aforementioned stressors may impact more severely, than on individuals in other vocations.

Yet it is possible to find individuals in financially more rewarding jobs who have little regard for their earnings. Like dancers, they also perform their job out of intrinsic motivation, and thus they may be equally vulnerable to the stressors as dancers may be.

It could be argued that personal attachment to the 'job' combined with the physicality of the vocation renders dancers more vulnerable to the stressors discussed. Most people will have experienced the uncharacteristic inability to deal with every day pressures during times of increased fatigue and most, at some point, will have succumbed to illness following periods of high mental and/or physical exertion in the lead up to a major event, such as exams or a

production season. However, one could cite the daily experiences of sports people and athletes and see that dancers are not alone in experiencing increased susceptibility to stressors due to fatigue and physical wear and tear. However, as the majority of professional sports people make more money than the majority of professional dancers[8], it could be argued that the effects of such an occupational hazard might be somewhat financially cushioned for sports people.

So what is it that makes dance a potentially more 'stress-laden' career than careers outside the performing arts? The answer perhaps lies in the area that, in addition to physicality, is a defining feature of the vocation; the artistic aspect.

[8] Surveys conducted by the Australian Bureau of statistics revealed that the 5,621 professional sports people included in the Sports Industries survey 2000-01, had an average income of $33, 801pa, while the 4,045 performing artists included in the Performing Arts Industries survey 1999-2000 (which included dancers), had an average income of $11, 619 pa. Of the 705 employing organisation involved in the production of music, theatre, dance etc, only 37 were dance production organisations.

Dancers & The Effect of the Artistic Domain

The general perception is that art belongs in the subjective[9] domain, an area that has probably played second fiddle to the objectivity of science, logic and rational thought, since the Age of Enlightenment. Despite the current inclination towards the spiritual and intuitive (consider the increased interest in alternative therapies), the objective paradigm still dominates, with arts and humanities subjects labeled 'soft' options next to the 'hard' sciences.

The subjective domain denotes individualism, feelings and personal opinions and approaches, and while these features have a place in arts practices, care must be taken not to compartmentalize art in the subjective domain. All art forms have basic techniques, skills or systems that are the building blocks of creating art. In essence, even in terms of avant-garde practices, one must initially know the 'rules' before one can break them and forge new paths. Additionally, while perhaps originating from personal feelings or intuition, it is a misperception that all artists wait for divine inspiration to reveal the path that will effect the transformation from an idea to a work of art. The alternative methods employed by artists may not appear logical, but they are often methodical processes of discarding and retaining, of revising and testing until the desired result is achieved.

In what context then is achievement of the result assessed? In a personal context, the creator has his/her own internal criteria by which the finished product is judged, and in pursuit of personal excellence, the creator undoubtedly will not cease until relatively satisfied with the end result. In the performing arts however, it is questionable whether self-satisfaction is the only measure taken into account when judging artistic worth. Fraleigh (1987) suggests that a theatrical dance work is not art unless "it is movement intentionally created and performed for others for an aesthetic purpose and end result" (p. 57). If the purpose of the performing arts is to perform for an audience then it cannot be denied that dancing and dance works will therefore invite interaction with, and judgement by others.

The ensuing complication of this invited dialogue and judgement is, that while all art forms may have techniques and skills that can be judged objectively, it is most likely that final judgement will be based on critical evaluation of these technical components, as well as other subjective

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[9] **Subjective - 1.** Loosely, characteristic of or dependent on an individual, a subject...**2.** Not directly public, not knowable to anyone else. The sense here is that the fundamental nature of an event can only be experienced internally, privately, and that the experience can never be publicly known but only inferred; eg weight is objective, heaviness is subjective...**3.** Not directly verifiable by others, not determinable by the public in any straightforward manner. **4.**...unreliable, biased, contaminated by personal, emotional evaluations. This meaning is primarily found as an epithet used against one whose subjective assessment in sense 3 differs from one's own; there is no logical reason why the subjective ought to be less reliable or trustworthy than the objective. Consider the nature of aesthetic judgment to appreciate this point (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 720).
Objective - 1. Adj. The basic meaning here derives from the notion of an object as a thing which is real, demonstrable or physical...and hence the status or function of which is publicly verifiable, externally observable and not dependent on internal, mental or subjective experience. **2.** Adj. Characterizing a thing the nature of which is determinable through the use of physical measurement (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 477).

qualities that cannot be assessed by any standardized measures. Without externally based objective criteria by which to judge this subjective aspect of a dancer's ability or the overall quality of a dance work, a personal framework is invariably employed in the assessment process. Understanding that everyone is different, the use of personal frameworks therefore yields inconsistent assessments between individuals.

To further complicate the task of formulating consistent judgements of art, the objectively grounded components of basic techniques/skills and systems float in their own pool of ambiguity. These seemingly immutable criteria, as the basis for objective judgement, while perhaps not as insubstantial as one person's opinion, are still only the culmination of many opinions and thus are not as objectively founded as initially thought. For a myriad of reasons, including any combination of opportunity, personal charisma and/or achievement, socio-cultural climate and financial status, at any point in history, a group of individuals form the template for what is good or appealing in the visual and performing arts. Lavender eloquently supports this notion –

> ...there is no single fixed standard of artistic judgement. Instead there are many critical alliances, each with a viewpoint different from others. At any given time, any of these viewpoints may be central within the art world, but only temporarily, because other viewpoints are always competing to become the most widely accepted. Even so, wide acceptance merely indicates a new temporary alignment of values in which other critical alliances occupy positions on the fringe for the time being.
> Acceptability in the art community, therefore is continually being established and reestablished. And the notions of acceptability and unacceptability depend on one another for meaning: knowing what is currently acceptable implies that one automatically knows what is not (Lavender, 1996, p. 33).

Lavender's sentiments could quite possibly be applied to many aspects of human culture. Fashions come and go. With reference to theatrical dance, this can be seen in the relatively brisk 'phoenix-like' behaviour of contemporary dance and even in the less rapid, and possibly less radical, changes that took place within the genre of ballet. It is therefore suggested, that true objective standards do not really exist in the arts, certainly not in terms of the unerring 'truths' that are 'mutually perceived' to exist in the physical world. Rather it appears that objectivity has been forced upon the arts, in order to create some common basis for discussion and judgement, but these 'objective' criteria are still, to a degree, era dependent and culturally and/or sub-culturally specific.

However, the arts world is not the only domain to experience the imposition of objectivity. By virtue of every individual's unique genetic composition and our ability to perceive the world in our own special way, we are all subjective by nature. In effect, objectivity has been imposed to

varying degrees, on every area of human endeavour to create a common foundation from which humankind can function as a community.

Perhaps the main difference between creative arts based pursuits and other human vocations is that in the creative arts humankind's inherent subjectivity is not disguised, indeed, it is even encouraged, as it is pivotal in the creation of art. If art were regulated by 'true' externally prescribed, objectively assessable standards then surely it would not be art. What constitutes art is another discussion, but at the most fundamental level, any art begins with the individual, and a desire to express something about the human experience in a distinctly individual way. The operative word here is 'individual'; thus personal artistic expression would not be possible within rigid parameters.

It is this encouraged subjectivity that makes being an artist, relative to other vocations, a precarious existence. In theatrical dance, while some genres change more rapidly than others (consider contemporary versus ballet), the pressure to meet the current standard within each genre is common. In this era of dance, current standards may range from suddenly being expected to proficiently execute break dancing manœuvres, to simply conforming to a different teacher's/choreographer's particular variation on the execution of a pirouette. In the latter end of the range, the standard/ideal could change with every day or every class.

While everyone in any vocation may worry about their performance, the potential for such frequent 'shifting of the goal posts' is probably not present in vocations outside the arts world, and therefore, worry about inconsistencies in performance may not be as warranted. This is not to encourage complacency, but there may be greater potential for those in non-arts' based vocations to relax, certain that their overall purpose/goal and the definition of right and wrong, within the job, is relatively unchanging on a daily or even weekly basis. From these relatively fixed points, the establishment of a worker's image as a highly competent individual can be realized over a period of time.

The tendency for artists (specifically dancers here), existing in the particularly unstable arts domain is that they may experience 'artistic anxiety'. This term refers to the state of tension and uneasiness that arises from having to be constantly vigilant of the current goals and if they are being achieved, in a domain where, in theory, goals can change daily. Right and wrong is teacher/choreographer specific. Different teachers/choreographers may hold different views about the correct way to execute a 'basic' movement (such as a ballet step)[10] and, in theory, the same teacher/choreographer could change their concept of the correct execution of a movement from one week to the next. Furthermore, as in any other vocation, every new goal is

[10] While it is generally acknowledged that basic ballet vocabulary is fairly fixed, there are various different schools of ballet technique that teach different stylistic qualities and some variations of basic steps. There is also, of course, the individual's personal interpretation of a basic step in addition to their training in a particular method of ballet.

equally important as every other one. Such a problem is compounded in dance, by the fact that mostly (apart from filming every class and rehearsal) there are no second viewings. The art that theatrical dancing creates is only tangible when it is happening, but the act of observing oneself while dancing, invariably, if only minutely changes the dancing. Thus assessing for oneself if the goal/standard was achieved is difficult, and dancers may be forced to rely on external sources for information about their performance. In this role of assessor, the teacher/choreographer may be joined by assertive, 'dance savvy' audience members and various reviewers/critics, some of whom, after a single viewing, pass sweeping judgement which, as the viewers, they believe dancers should whole-heartedly heed. Under the subjective gaze of this triad, a potential side effect of 'artistic anxiety' is self-doubt about one's ability.

It is therefore suggested that theatrical dance is potentially a mentally and emotionally traumatic career because of the nature of art. That is to say, art would not be art if it succumbed to existing within an objective framework as other vocations generally succeed in doing. The suggestion that art is permitted to function within humankind's inherently subjective framework means that there is little consistency in the goals/standards to which artists aspire. Dancers must, therefore, literally always be on their toes, striving to keep pace with what is desired. It is this constant vigilance and self-monitoring that may lead to 'artistic anxiety'.

Dance: An Area of Psychological Interest

Perhaps because of this artistic component, the dance population has increasingly become a focus of interest for psychology researchers. Until the last fifteen years, there was little research interest in the mental and emotional component of being a dancer. This oversight seems strange considering the amount of hard work, determination and discipline required, and the sheer physical stress endured by dancers through training and in professional life, in order to be successful.

In the past decade, psychologists have realized that dancers may be a high-risk population for psychological disorders and have conducted various studies to determine the reason for this apparent vulnerability.

Studies in America found that dancers may be at significantly higher risk of developing eating disorders than the general population (Hamilton, Brooks-Gunn & Warren 1985, Brooks-Gunn, Warren & Hamiliton, 1987), and also that dancers score significantly higher on exercise dependence scales than other athletes (Pierce, Daleng & McGowan, 1993). The researchers suggested that the requirement for an exceptionally lean physique in dance might be responsible for these findings. Other studies found that dancers possess a personality profile that renders them particularly vulnerable to psychological problems. Bakker's longitudinal study (1988, 1991) into the development of personality in dancers, found dancers, compared to non-dancers, to be more introverted, to possess higher levels of emotionality, to be more anxious and to have a less favourable physical self concept. Similar results were found in a comparative study between dancers, actors, musicians and singers, the dancers being the most introverted, emotionally unstable, anxious and obsessive group of all the groups under study (Haycox and Wilson, 1992). Another study found dancers "to have a unique (MMPI-2)[11] personality profile with positive correlations to eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder and addictions" (Taylor, 1997, p. 525). Reasons for these results include self-selection (the ballet subculture attracts a certain type of personality) and the competitive nature of the profession, in tandem with some of the occupational stressors mentioned in the previous section, such as the nomadic lifestyle and poor pay. A study by Robson (2001) illustrates how dance is a factor in arresting normal psychological development of dancers through adolescence. Robson states that, compared with non dancing adolescents, dance students in early adolescence (11-13 years of age) "have a cognitive understanding and moral development in advance of their years" (p. 111). Yet by late adolescence (18-21 years of age), graduating dance students have fallen

[11] **MMPI-2 -Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory** – One of the, if not the, most widely used self-report inventories for the assessment of personality. Published in 1942, the first version consisted of a basic set of 550 items, each of which was a descriptive statement about characteristic feelings or behaviours with which the subject indicated either agreement or disagreement...In response to criticisms concerning many antiquated items, as well as possible biases in the item pool and measurement scales, the inventory was updated in the late 1980's (MMPI – 2), and the scoring system was revised to reflect the results from a large representative sample of Americans (Reber &

behind their non-dancing peers. While non-dancers, by this stage, have mostly developed a sense of self-assurance and self-direction, dancers, under the pressure of impending professional life, are still dependent on their authority figures for their sense of self worth.

The majority of these studies however, have sampled only ballet dancers. Krasnow and Kabbani's 1999 review of the analytically based research (as opposed to theoretical articles) revealed that merely 68 articles comprised the entire body of research on modern dancers at the time of the review. This body of research covered areas of: injury incidence, conditioning testing, nutrition, body composition and menstrual dysfunction, psychological and psychosocial factors, training enhancement, bio-mechanical mechanisms and measurement tools. It is assumed that the authors of this review are experienced academics, skilled in the method of conducting thorough and comprehensive literature searches. By contrast, the less experienced and possibly less comprehensive literature searches conducted for this thesis have still yielded many more than 68 studies on ballet dancers, in comparison with the number of studies found on contemporary dancers. For a contemporary dancer, such an imbalance in research begs the question, why only ballet dancers?

Various reasons spring to mind. Fewer people outside the dance world know contemporary dance exists, compared with the number who have an awareness of ballet. It may have been thought that contemporary dancers would not be sufficiently different from ballet dancers to warrant separate studies, hence findings from studies on ballet dancers could be applied to contemporary dancers. Perhaps it has been difficult to locate a large enough sample of contemporary dancers to yield results representative of the greater contemporary dance population. Another equally plausible obstacle is the requirement of scientific research for various controls to be imposed and to have components clearly defined. In a sense, contemporary dance takes pride in eluding easy definition. This in mind, perhaps psychologists found the definition of contemporary dance and that which constitutes a contemporary dancer, too slippery to grasp, and therefore were unable to select a representative sample.

This predominant focus on ballet dancers may seem irrelevant. It could be argued that a dancer is a dancer, that they all have the same anatomy, and that they undergo similar training and daily rigours, irrespective of the dance genre to which they subscribe. Hence, could not results from studies on ballet dancers be generalized to contemporary dancers? According to Krasnow & Kabbani (1999), the answer is no. Their review revealed that ballet and modern dancers differ in injury sites and rates, nutrition and body composition and bio-mechanical mechanisms. One of their concluding recommendations was that modern dancers need to be studied separately from ballet dancers.

Reber, 2001, p. 438, 439).

The study by Pierce and Daleng (1998), on distortion of body image among female ballet dancers found, ballet dancers were at greater risk for distortion of body image (therefore at greater risk of developing conditions such as eating disorders and exercise dependence), than other athletes because of the need to conform to "an aesthetic ideal body image beyond that required for the physical demands of dance" (Pierce and Daleng, 1998, p. 769), as well as fulfilling the expectation of a high standard physical performance. The pertinent point here is the reference to the "aesthetic ideal body image". This study (as most others), sampled only ballet dancers. In the context of aesthetics, ballet and contemporary dance differ in many ways; from the ideal dancer's body, to qualities constituting a "good" dance artist. It therefore appears incorrect to generalize results from studies on ballet dancers to contemporary dancers.

United though they are in passion and ambition, the experience of being a ballet dancer is different from that of a contemporary dancer, most obviously in an aesthetic context, but also in the areas highlighted by Krasnow & Kabbani (1999), and therefore, not illogically, in a psychological context. In their quest to be "good" or successful dancers within their respective genres, ballet dancers and contemporary dancers may suffer from 'artistic anxiety', but of different kinds. While in both genres 'artistic anxiety' may have the same detrimental result (including insecurity, low self-esteem, eating disorders, anxiety or depression), the difference in the 'artistic anxiety' lies in the very nature and intentions of each dance style.

> French aristocrats admired fine manners and made social encounters as intricate as choreography. Dance prospered in such an environment, and consequently, balletic deportment is aristocratic in nature and ballet steps retain French names (Anderson, 1992, p. 37).

This atmosphere of social "one-upsmanship" was pivotal in the evolution of ballet. As dances became more complex and technique more intricate, it became more popular to hire professional dancers to perform in place of the nobility, thus shifting the focus from 'doing' to 'watching', from social dancing to theatrical dancing. This professionalisation of dance was further promoted through the shift in venue, from the halls of the nobility to the proscenium arch theatre, again strengthening the notion that the dance was to be watched.

Ballet of this era most probably reached its peak during the life of Louis XIV (1638 – 1715) who was a great fan of both watching and performing ballet. It was during his reign that the fundamentals of ballet technique (the externally rotated stance and the five positions of the feet) were formalised, and in 1661 Louis founded the Academie Royale de Danse. This organisation preceded the Academie Royale de Musique, founded in 1669, which is now the Paris Opera and the home of the Paris Opera Ballet.

The old adage states that "art imitates life", so ballet and social trends appear to be entwined. As ballet informed and perpetuated the social protocols of the 17th century, so the socio-cultural trends of the late 19th and early 20th century gave birth to the fashion for thin dancers.

Victorian era women were idealized as staid and virtuous. The only respectable avenues were a life of virginal chastity, or that of dutiful wife and child bearer. In an era where famine and disease were commonplace, a thin physique was not attractive, as excess body fat was associated with strength of physical constitution and fertility.

With the advent of World War I however, the simmering women's rights movement of the late 19th century reached a point of culmination. Women in the workforce successfully performing 'men's' jobs resoundingly proved that women were of equal capability. Gradual acknowledgement of this fact occurred through legislation, such as in Britain, with the granting of women's suffrage in 1918, the passing of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act in 1919 and the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1923[13]. Perhaps more importantly however, women discovered the power of independence and self-determination. With a degree of relative financial and mental liberation from men, women embarked on a path of personal emancipation with regard to the female body, female sexuality and the right to choose marriage and motherhood, an

[13] The passing of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act in 1919 implemented the removal of the "formal legal restrictions on women entering the professions, especially law" (Stevenson, 1984, p. 169). Similarly "the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1923 relieved a wife of the necessity of proving cruelty, desertion or another 'cause' in addition to adultery as grounds for divorce" (ibid. p. 169).

in Fokine's *Cléopâtre* (1909), and *Schérhérazade* (1910) and, prior to joining Ballet Russes, in a privately performed production of *Salome* (1908) for which Fokine choreographed a notorious "Dance of the Seven Veils". While Rubenstein was described as possessing a "hermaphrodite slimness" (Jowitt, 1988, p. 111), the significance of which may have been emphasized by the sensual connotations of the works, it was not until the 30's, through the work of George Balanchine (1904- 1983), that ballet began to appropriate the thin look.

Russian born, a former dancer and choreographer with Ballet Russes, Balanchine arrived in the United States of America in the 1933 and has since often been dubbed the father of American ballet. Responsible for the evolution of a more neo-classical style of ballet, his creative vision desired tall, slender dancers for the realisation of his work. Linda Hamilton, previously a dancer with the New York City Ballet and now a performing arts psychologist, recounts her experience.

> In the 1930s, George Balanchine, my former artistic director, introduced the ultra-thin look to ballet through his neo-classical choreography which streamlined everything from scenery to weight... Balanchine told us that we were supposed to look like fashion models – basically tall and thin. Fortunately I was one of the lucky dancers who did not need to diet, although some of my colleagues were living on M & M's™, cigarettes and coffee (Hamilton, 1997, p. 23).

Now, in the 21st century, the skinny trend has progressed from passing fad to one of the defining features of the style, and an influential factor in success or failure. Quotations from students and teachers in Robson's (2001) article on the adolescent development of dancers, highlight how ingrained the thin aesthetic has become.

> Marianne says: The thin look is the ideal; 50% of your mark is based on your look; people begin to think if you are thin they'll look better. There is competition as to who is thinnest but no one ever talks about it because it is one of the most important things (Robson, 2001, p. 111).

> Rehearsal director says: While I have seen many beautiful dancers with big breasts and while I would like to say that I consider talent over physique when auditioning new company members, we are running a company that has a young look. Slim girls or athletic-looking girls generally fit better into the repertoire (Robson, 2001, p. 111).

Conformity to a prescribed physical ideal however, is only is only one of several requirements within the canon of ballet. A ballet dancer exists in the context of a long history and a tradition and culture, so embedded in the global consciousness of the western world, that even the general public conceptualizes ballet fairly accurately (an assertion supported by the

Professional Dancer Survey[15]). Ballet's most enduring aspect, over nearly 400 years of history, is the movement vocabulary based around the externally rotated position of the legs. While structures of ballet works and costuming have changed with times and fashion, the language of ballet, the technique and the seemingly effortless quality of its execution have more or less remained unchanged. In short, while evolutionary within its own paradigm, the fundamental aspects of ballet have been preserved through tradition, and perpetuated over time and around the world through its mutually understood language, affording the genre a precisely defined identity.

Additional to the prescribed physical look, movement vocabulary and its execution, is the attitude expected of ballet's aspirants. Quite possibly another legacy of the style's feudal era aristocratic origins is the hierarchical structure upon which training, rehearsal and often professional company life function. Traditionally, the teacher, director or choreographer is the autocratic dictator and the dancers his/her tools. The result of such a power imbalance is militaristic in nature. The authority figure commands, the dancers obey. The dancers learn to suppress thoughts, feelings and questions in deference to the authority figure and the authority figure can utilize that renunciation to obtain the best from the dancers. The saying 'suffering for one's art' is recognised in connection with many art forms, not least of all ballet. Its precise origins are unknown, but it supports the notion that if one desperately wants something, one will employ any means to achieve that goal, even to the point of sacrifice and maybe personal suffering. It is only a small step in logic to the tendency to use suffering as a measure of dedication and discipline. This mentality of suffering, as an indicator of commitment, has become ingrained in the ballet culture, and perhaps, is also a legacy of ballet's history. It is reported that Louis XIV kept his courtiers dangling on the brink of social exile, by having as many as three balls per week, during which, their execution of the latest dances would be scrutinised by all. Poor execution of the dances resulted in demotion in court status, while failure to attend was social suicide and quite possibly resulted in an irrevocable fall from the King's favour.

Ballet dancers have often been asked by those in authority, explicitly or implicitly, to demonstrate their commitment by the degree of sacrifice they are willing to make. Sacrifices range from additional rehearsals (not usually an unreasonable request), to silently enduring public humiliation, an ultimatum to lose weight or requests to dance when injured or sick. It is not expected that such 'outdated' attitudes would persist in this era of emancipation, where tolerance of differences is the popular, socially acceptable mantra. Indeed, the necessity for change in attitudes towards dance training and working and in the teacher/student and director/dancer relationship has been recognised. Reform in this area was a much discussed

[15] Eighty percent of respondents (RR = 100%) indicated they do not feel people in general have a good idea of what the respondent does when told the respondent is a contemporary dancer. Furthermore, 90% (RR = 90%) of respondents believe the general public have a better understanding of ballet as opposed to contemporary dance (Professional Dancer Survey).

topic at *Not Just Anybody*, a conference for the advancement of health, well-being and excellence in dance and dancers, held via satellite link in Toronto and The Hague in 1999. Yet, a survey of American dancers conducted by Linda Hamilton (1997), though Dance Magazine, found 24% of the respondents had been expected to continue dancing when seriously injured and "forty-eight percent felt unjustly criticized by their teachers in dance class" (ibid. p. 63). Similarly, dancers in the Professional Dancer Survey cited this master/servant attitude and the politics that accompany the hierarchy, as reasons for leaving ballet for contemporary dance.

> [I was] bored with the processes of being used as a tool for choreographers and not as an integral part of the creative whole, bored with being treated like a child.
>
> In a ballet company you're not treated like an artist, you're more like a paintbrush.
>
> (Professional Dancer Survey)

For ballet dancers, the potential consequence of existing within this well defined genre in terms of 'artistic anxiety', is an extreme pressure to conform to the prescribed formula that dictates everything from body shape to the precise execution of a movement, or risk failure as a dancer. Compounding the risk of developing 'artistic anxiety' is the tendency towards the subordination of the individual, which appears to be necessary to successfully fit into and advance within the system on which ballet culture often functions. Basing one's sense of self worth solely on the opinions of another would appear precarious at the best of times, let alone when the individual also exists within the highly competitive world of dance. One respondent in a survey (Hamilton, Stricker & Josephs, in Hamilton, 1997) of New York City Ballet (NYCB) dancers, illustrates the impact of this external control. Responding to a question about his relationship with former NYCB artistic director and choreographer George Balanchine, the dancer answered-

> It's like he was the king and you're a peasant. You don't go near him. That feeling always prevailed when I was around him – of a higher class somehow. If he said "do that step" and I hated it, I'd do it anyway, because he was the master and I was aspiring to this unattainable nobility. It was a relief when he died. The problem now is that nothing means as much as when he was standing in the wings (p. 12, Hamilton 1997).

behold, Petipa's ballets, by the late 19th century, were beginning to stagnate in their formula. It was not until the era of the Ballets Russes (1909-1929), under the charismatic directorship of entrepreneur and arts aficionado Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929), that ballet effected a re-alignment with the modern era.

Socio-culturally, the late 19th and early 20th century was a time of innovation and vigorous change. The industrial revolution had paved the way for science and technology to become the new religion, with people such as Curie, Edison, Einstein, Pavlov, Freud and Ford forging the way. The machine era also brought changes in social dynamics, with the development of a wealthier middle class and the creation of a new urban working class. Ideas of emancipation were circulating, with the rise of Marxism and the Suffragette movement. The infectious spirit of liberation and exploration saw the rejection of escapism and melodrama, and the rise of realism in the theatre through the plays of Norwegian, Henrik Ibsen, and the method acting technique of Russian, Konstantin Stanislavsky. With the pervading socio-cultural atmosphere and especially the shift in the theatre, it is understandable that ballet began to appear stilted and to some degree outdated. A relic of the feudal era and a manifestation of patriarchal dominance, ballet's relevance was in contention. These circumstances provided the conditions for a new form of dance to take root and the most likely places for this development were America and Germany, where ballet was not so solidly entrenched.

Chronologically, Loie Fuller (1862-1928) was the first performer to venture towards new realms of movement. Originally an actress and singer, attempts to tame an overlong skirt led to the idea of fabric manipulation as a tool in creating a new kind of visual spectacle. Aided by skillful lighting and masses of billowing silk, she used the fluid movement of her body, and sometimes wooden sticks to extend her reach, to create works inspired by natural phenomena such as flowers, and the movements of insects and flames. Fuller's performances, coupled with tenacity and a deft ability for self-promotion, afforded her much success, most notably in Europe rather than in her native country of America. While important in priming society for the subsequent revolutions in dance, Fuller's work is perhaps of greater significance in its contribution to the development of costuming and lighting. Her work was also embraced by the visual arts, particularly, the impressionists who saw her as an embodiment of their exploration into movement and the effects of light in painting.

American, Isadora Duncan (1878-1927) is generally acknowledged as the innovator of modern dance. Dissatisfied with the expressive limitations of the established dance forms of ballet and show dancing, she endeavored to develop her own way of moving. Duncan saw ballet, in particular, as mechanical and contrived. She took her inspiration from the natural world, specifically its cycles. Combined with a deep affinity for music, she concluded that the origin of all movement was the solar plexus and she allowed her energy to flow wherever it would, acknowledging weight, and the effect of gravity; something alien to ballet. Her dancing was

characterized by walking, skipping, running and jumping movements, expressive gestures, mime and occasionally the odd impromptu speech. Dressed in flowing Grecian style robes, un-corsetted and barefoot, Isadora broke all conventions of dance and of acceptable female conduct.

While dubbed the mother of modern dance, Duncan's legacy is not one of dance technique. A charismatic performer herself, attempts to teach her style of movement were not successful as her dancing issued from personal depths, rather than a theory of movement and a systematic technique. For this reason, however, Duncan perhaps thoroughly deserves the title of founder, as the genre of modern dance is not a single, specific technique or style. Rather modern dance, as with Duncan's explorations, derives from an attitude towards dance and perhaps an attitude towards life. It is an approach that encourages individuality, the development of personal style and courage of spirit, all of which were exemplified by Duncan with great impact. As Daly (1995) summarizes, "effectively, she elevated dancing from low to high, from sexual to spiritual, from black to white, from profane to sacred, from woman to goddess, from entertainment to art" (p. 89).

Modern dance continued its evolution in this individualistic and exploratory manner with pioneers such as Ruth St Denis (1879-1968), and Ted Shawn (1891- 1972) in America and Mary Wigman (1886-1973) in Germany.

Wigman's explorations in *Ausdruckstanz* (expressive dance as it was termed in German) focused on the primitive impulses she believed reside dormant in all of us. Asserting that dance released and reconnected her with the primordial force within, she favoured the use of masks in her works to transcend her everyday self and personality. She opened a school in Dresden in 1920, which became the centre of German modern dance, but was condemned by the Nazis and eventually forced to close until after World War II.

Ruth St. Denis preoccupied herself with movement inspired by the exotic Orient, drawing on various ethnic dance forms. Ted Shawn, initially a student of St Denis and then her dance partner and husband, later went on to champion the cause of male dance in America. In conjunction with running their company, St. Denis and Shawn succeeded in setting up a number of dance schools around the country, where they taught an eclectic mixture of dance styles, ranging from Hindu to the latest ballroom moves. The fervor of the modern dance movement continued however, in the true reactionary form that has become a defining characteristic of the genre. The questioning of current dance values forged the next generation of dancers including Martha Graham (1894-1991), Doris Humphrey (1895-1958) and Charles Weidman (1901-1975). Students of Denishawn, they became disillusioned with the pastiche of styles taught in the school, feeling that the company lacked integrity in its equal willingness to participate in serious cultural events and perform in showy commercial revues such as the Ziegfeld Follies.

All three dancers eventually left to pursue their own ideas of movement. Graham, in particular, went on to become perhaps the most influential dancer and choreographer of modern dance. Her technique based around the contraction and release of the breath and her philosophy that life is effort and that this should be reflected in the dance, have been labeled the antithesis of ballet, which, in contrast, seeks to conceal effort. In opposition to ballet, Graham's movement was harsh, angular, grounded and above all expressive. She believed movement was an external manifestation of an internal state, thus, she sought to strip away contrivance in movement, in order to let the true essence or emotion speak.

Like Graham, Humphrey developed a technique more suited to her expressional needs. Specifically, her movement and choreography derived from the concept of fall and recovery. With a focus on resisting and yielding to the force of gravity, many of Humphrey's works concerned themes of human conflict. After leaving Denishawn, Humphrey and Weidman formed their own school and company, creating a partnership that lasted 18 years. Weidman went on to form his own school and company after separating from Humphrey.

As action begets reaction, which begets action, which begets reaction, so the cycle of modern dance continued and a new generation of dancers pushed though the ranks and has continued to do so to the present day. Once radical in its rebellion against the rigidity and formalism of ballet, the new generation felt their elders had regressed into a codification of their own, having become too preoccupied with dramatic narrative and emotion in their works. In the late 40's and early 50's, Merce Cunningham (1919-) spearheaded a new direction in dance. Originally a dancer in Graham's company, his use of chance in creating and performing his works, and his rejection of the interdependency of theatrical elements, initiated inquiry into the very purpose of dance. This inquiry was taken further in the 60's and 70's by the choreographers of the Judson Dance Theater, whose deconstruction of the very nature of dance precipitated such probing questions as "What movement constitutes dance?", "Who is a dancer?" and "What/Where is a performance space?". Dancers such as Yvonne Rainer (1934-), Steve Paxton (1939-), Deborah Hay (1941-), David Gordon (1936-) and Trisha Brown (1936-) questioned the very meaning and purpose of dance. They proclaimed dance's liberation from existing purely for the sake of thematic, narrative or emotional expression, and promoted the notion of dance for the sake of dance. The opening lines of Rainer's 1965 manifesto illustrates this commitment, " NO to spectacle, no to virtuosity, no to transformations and magic and make believe" (In Craine & Mackrell, 2000, p. 385). While categorised as the post-modern dancers, the results of their revolutionary thinking, once again, exemplify the spirit of the original modern dance pioneers, and can be seen today in the apparently "anything goes" attitude to the making and dancing of contemporary dance works. Quite possibly the trend for cross arts and multi media in dance is a descendent of this paradigm shift. Anderson (1992), summarizes eloquently with a 1927 quotation from American modern dancer Helen Tamiris (1905-1966), "There are no general rules. Each work of art creates its own code" (p. 165).

Today, contemporary dance is possibly less obscure and abstract than in the post-modern 60s and 70s. It could be argued that the aggressive rejection of meaning in dance by the Judson dancers was just as much a dictatorial suppression of individuality and personal expression, as was originally abhorred by the genre's founders. While dancers and dance makers continue to collaborate and question the values of their art form, it could be suggested that a reconciliation has occurred in the purpose or meaning of dance works, quite possibly in reaction to the ideology of the Judson dancers. While not the sole intention, it is now accepted that contemporary works can be made to specifically convey a narrative or explore a specific theme or issue. Presented with a myriad of 'legitimate' paths to follow, both in intention and form, explorations in contemporary dance have been further diversified, by the integration of physical disciplines outside the traditional theatrical dance arena (such as martial arts, yoga and various forms of street dancing), other performance-based art forms and multi media. Courtesy of recent technological advances, the use of film, slide projection and performer generated sound accompaniment, have been popular areas of experimentation. Such developments in the creation and performance of contemporary dance, serve to highlight the genre's continued evolution through the original commitment to individuality, exploration and innovation.

If the need to conform is the root of potential 'artistic anxiety' for ballet dancers, then by Helen Tamiris' assertion, being a contemporary dancer could never be traumatic. If there are no rules to which to conform, and each dance work is its own isolated event, then the dancers performing the work can only be judged in the context of that work. Unfortunately human beings do not operate this way. In addition to the other facets that comprise who we are, we are all a product of past experiences. We do not live life through isolated events, rather we are constantly assimilating new information as it presents[16].

As such, a contemporary dancer is just as much a product of the history, culture and tradition of what has gone before, as is a ballet dancer. Like ballet dancers, contemporary dancers assimilate the knowledge imparted by dance history and their own experience. The difference here is the difference in clarity of the through-line from the origins of modern dance to the present contemporary dancer, compared with that of ballet. The evolution of the genre has not progressed systematically from an established identity, language and movement vocabulary, as ballet did, but rather through the inheritance of a spirit and drive to challenge, experiment and innovate. While exciting, such resultant diversity within the genre may prove confusing for the contemporary dancer, when forced to fit it all together to inform the present identity. The very fact that there are two words (modern and contemporary) to label this genre of dance, as opposed to the one general word for ballet, alludes to the root of 'artistic anxiety' for

[16] This process of assimilation is most evident in the way we make assumptions about everything in our surrounding environment. From birth humans begin forming and using schemas – mental representations of what we know and expect about the world, which expand as knowledge and experience expand. In essence, they provide a shortcut in thinking as we interact with and respond to the world around us. "Schemas, in other words, organize past experiences and provide a framework for understanding future experiences" (Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 308).

contemporary dancers. The ideology of contemporary dance promotes individuality. One major repercussion of this is the lack of a global mutually understood language across the contemporary genre, at even the most basic level of dance technique. It is understood that formulation of a common language in contemporary dance would possibly defy the spirit in which the founders began their journey. The formalism and codification of ballet was part of their initial objection in their quest for individuality and personal expression. Ironically, it is the lack of language that forms the basis of 'artistic anxiety' in contemporary dancers.

Language is often cited as the ability that sets humans apart from animals. Previously thought to be a result of the greater intelligence afforded by the increase in brain size, current theories suggest that language may have come first (Bickerton 1995, Calvin 1994) or that language and increases in brain size occurred together, through a reciprocal relationship[17] (Stewart & Cohen, 1997). The use of primitive language had positive results with regard to survival and perpetuation of the species. Thus, evolution saw fit to nurture this feature with the expansion of brain size and capacity. At a later evolutionary stage, the development of syntax opened the way for the communication and cultural explosion that led to modern day man.

While syntax was pivotal in humankind's evolutionary journey, it would have been useless for communicative purposes without a mutual understanding of which words link to which physical objects and, further along on the evolutionary continuum, to which abstract concepts. The simplest example of this failure to link words with the appropriate objects or concepts, is an individual's inability to communicate in a foreign country without having learnt the native tongue. A more profound consequence of a lack of common language can be seen in the inability to formulate, implement and maintain rules and regulations in domains as varied as inventing and successfully playing sports, to the ordered harmonious coexistence of individuals in society. History illustrates this point in the many cases of colonists denying indigenous populations the use of their native tongue, and enforcing the learning of the colonial language. This example highlights the power of language, as denial of indigenous languages was also an effective tool in sabotaging the culture and identity of that race, dislocating the people from each other as a group, and rendering them easier to rule.

[17] The standard theory of the evolution of intelligence is reductionist: it focuses upon the data processing abilities of networks of nerve cells...Bigger brains, like bigger computers, can support more complex algorithms...This explanation of the human mind therefore starts with nervous circuitry...'Once upon a time there was a nerve cell and then we got Einstein' ...we...think a purely internal route towards intelligence is unlikely. It is not at all obvious how big a selective 'plus' intelligence *on its own* really is...intelligence has to have something to be intelligent *about*... And so we must begin to address some of the questions raised...concerning the relation between human intelligence and human culture. We shall argue that they are a complicit pair, co-evolving, feeding off each other, mutually modifying at every step (Stewart & Cohen, 1997, p. 135, 163, 164).

> Language, any language, has a dual character: its is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture... Language carries culture, and culture carries...the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world...its [colonialism's] most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised: the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world ...For colonialism this involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture...and the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser. The domination of a people's language by the language of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised (Ngũgĩ, 1986, p. 436, 438, 439).

Returning to the concept of rule formation, it follows, that if there is no mutually understood language, then definitive rules or boundaries for any domain cannot be established. Those to whom the rules or boundaries apply will either have no understanding of them, or each individual will have an individual interpretation. Subsequently, without accurate delineation of the boundaries, the objective within these confines will also be hazy and, consequently, without knowledge of the rules or boundaries as a guide, there is a limited ability to know whether or not the objective has been achieved or even how far from achievement one was. For example, an alien with no understanding of human concepts or life on earth in general, must find and pick a beautiful flower. He or she (it?) does not speak any human language and therefore no one can impart the knowledge required to identify a flower and pick one, let alone the subsequent knowledge that comes from the initial flower concept that will inform the alien if it is a 'beautiful' flower or not.

The ramification of a lack of a global language in contemporary dance is that it is more difficult to set definitive values by which a contemporary dancer's worth as a dancer may be determined. In essence, it may be hard for contemporary dancers to ever know, with any certainty, how good they are, how well they are doing in their chosen career path and, in light of all the potential stressors discussed, if their chosen occupation was a worthwhile choice. The reality of the genre's ambiguous nature is suggested by results from the Student Dancer Survey. While most dancers indicated they prefer to dance contemporary, 64% of respondents (RR = 88%), indicated that they have a better idea of when they are 'getting it right' in a ballet class than in a contemporary class. The main reason cited was that the parameters of ballet are clearly defined and established. "Ballet has positions and names for movements, order of class: pliés, tendues...[etc]" (WAAPA dancer, Student Dancer Survey).

It should be acknowledged that there are some terms in contemporary dance which appear to yield a common understanding. It is probably safe to state that most contemporary dancers have the same theoretical understanding of a Martha Graham contraction[18]. However, this understanding has been facilitated by the preservation of Graham's technique through her school and company, and also by the magnitude of her impact on the development of the genre. The fact that the Graham technique features as a standard unit in many tertiary dance courses round the world, and is included in three of the five main dance courses in Australia[19], testifies to its status as an established lexicon of movement within the contemporary dance genre. It merits mentioning, that contemporary dancers who choose to focus on a technique such as Graham, are possibly at lesser risk of experiencing 'artistic anxiety' than dancers who dabble in a myriad of contemporary movement styles. These dancers have a template, not unlike ballet's, through the movement vocabulary and through the philosophy and intentions Graham maintained in the creation and performance of her works, against which they, and others, can monitor and judge their dancing. If these dancers experience 'artistic anxiety', it is more likely to be similar to that of ballet dancers.

Perhaps, however, the cementing of the Graham technique in the collective contemporary dance consciousness is indicative of her successors' motivations. The codification of the Graham technique is quite reflective of ballet (an aspect which Graham originally found objectionable) and on a philosophical level, perhaps the form should be excluded from the genre. The beauty of the contemporary dance genre is that the dance creators have free reign to create whatever movement they want and refer to that movement with terminology of their choice. In turn, the dancers adopt this vocabulary to communicate with their choreographer and even avid audience members may learn this language in order to participate in discussion with each other, the choreographer and the dancers. In effect, a sub-culture is created.

The problem really arises on a more global level. With so many different words describing a possibly infinite number of movements and variations of movements, how does communication within the wider contemporary dance community occur, let alone in the world external to the contemporary dance community (such as the audiences, the media and society)? As stated in a previous section, standards in artistic domains are formulated through the thoughts and opinions of whichever group or groups of people are most influential at the time. Yet it is understandable that if individuals within these groups do not even use the same terminology, or have a different understanding of the same words, meaningful communication is limited, inhibiting the formulation of standards by which progress and achievement can be measured.

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[18] The action of contraction, initiated by a squeezing out of the breath, begins sharply in the pelvis and goes through the whole body. Like 'a clenched fist', it is a concentration of the body's energy. If carried out with enough force it can pull the body off balance, carrying it from one plane or position to another. With the intake of breath, the action of release is initiated in the base of the spine ad continues through the back, returning the body to 'a normal state, not floppy in complete relaxation' (Thomas, 1995, p. 97, in part quoting Terry, 1975, p. 53-61).

[19] Graham technique is part of the curriculum in tertiary dance courses at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, the Victorian College of the Arts and at the Australian Ballet School. It was also part of the dance

span of that one work, not long enough to develop into an established technique, thereby denying the creation of a known movement image.

While different in many aspects, ballet and contemporary dancers start with the same anatomy. In order for ballet dancers to execute ballet technique in the prescribed way, they must possess a superior body control in terms of muscle strength, flexibility and co-ordination. Additionally, they must be able to use this control to perform the prescribed technique in all manner of movement combinations, within the specified space configuration, within the specified time (music dictated or otherwise), while also contending with the physical forces of nature, such as gravity, momentum and friction. In essence, the judgement of a ballet dancer's ability begins with assessment of the rudimentary skills of body control. A dancer of any genre must aspire to a fine control of their instrument to be able to dance to the precise requirements of the dance creator. Certainly, body control is one of the assessment criteria in the contemporary dance unit of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts dance course, as it most probably is in all the other Australian tertiary dance courses. Possessing the same anatomy as ballet dancers, body control could be conceived as a logical place to begin formulating a universal measure for assessing a contemporary dancer's ability across the genre and across the multitude of techniques and movements within it.

Perhaps the anatomy of the individual and the physical forces of our world are the only constants for any dancer. While muscle strength and flexibility may vary, once normal growth has ceased, the skeletal structure is fixed, as are the ligaments and tendons that respectively attach bones to bones and attach bones to muscles. From this fixed structure, it is assumed that there is a finite number of ways[20] a body can move and due to the structure of the human body and the laws of physics, efficient movement can only be achieved in one way, that being from a foundation of correct postural alignment in conjunction with consistent use of stabilization[21].

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[20] ...movement potential is a direct result of the presence of joints. Moreover the relative range of the motion at each given joint is, in part, a function of the structure of the bones at each point of articulation. At each joint, movement is restricted or limited in some way. At some joints [by] the bone structure itself...at other joints...by the ligamentous structure supporting the boney articulation. At still other joints, the primary restriction is muscular. Each joint has a combination of these three restrictions (Fitt, 1996, p. 17).
Muscles pull in a straight line and pull both attachments closer to the point where the muscle crosses the joint...A muscle that crosses straight across at a joint will have...action only on one plane. A muscle that crosses a joint obliquely (wraps around the bones) will have...actions on more than one plane (ibid. 1996, p. 112). *As muscle attachment points are fixed in the body the action(s) of a joint is/are also fixed as determined by the attachment points of its muscle. Thus, there is a finite number of ways in which any joint can move.*

[21] Muscular efficiency...is a matter of using the minimum amount of effort to perform a given action...It is, in effect, economy of motion (wasteless motion). Older professional dancers often exhibit economy of motion. They have to; it is a matter of survival. Aging bodies begin to show the effects of muscular overkill, and dancers who use far more effort than is necessary are frequently those who leave dance at an earlier age (ibid. 1996, p. 309). *Efficient movement is therefore paramount to the pursuit of a long, injury free dance career and even a pain free life after dance. To achieve efficient movement, the dancer must start from correct alignment and then proceed to maintain an awareness of this alignment during movement. This alignment is crucial as it is the position where the body's weight is most evenly distributed over the base of support (most often the feet), creating the most efficient position.* That is, it requires the least muscular contraction (*the least amount of effort to counteract the force of gravity)* (ibid. 1996, p. 24). *Additionally, efficient movement cannot occur without adequate stabilization during movement.* Stabilization may be against the pull of gravity or against the pull of other muscles, but regardless of the source of the opposing action, stabilization is critical to effective human movement.
Muscles contract in the center and pull equally on both ends...unless one [end] is stabilized by another muscle, by gravity, or by some other outside force...When one [end] is stabilized, all of the contractile power is focused on the

Through this common physique, and the assumption that all dancers have a similar experience of the physical forces,[22] it is expected that achievement of efficient movement can be resolved into the components of anatomy and the laws of physics. From this rationale, dancers of any genre could thus acquire some certainty in assessing their own performance, at least on the level of basic body control.

The use of body control as a gauge of performance, or overall ability is, however, mediated by the dancer's knowledge of anatomy and bio-mechanics in relation to dance, their ability to apply this knowledge and their understanding of the movement or technique to be executed. Major tertiary dance courses in Australia all include units of anatomy and kinesiology, giving dancers a substantial starting point in the pursuit of optimal body control. Mediating factors aside however, it could be proposed that demonstrations of body control through the achievement of specified movements, is a consistent objective measure of a dancer's ability, across dancers and across movement styles.

Body control may serve as some sort of universal objective measure of ability in the contemporary dance genre, but using this alone is an over simplification. While a high level of body control will predispose the dancer to movement/technique execution of a superior level, a consummate dance artist must have more than just a finely tuned command of their body to earn such a title in any dance genre. Principal ballet dancers do not rise to this rank simply because they are highly skilled technicians. In addition to having reached a supreme level of technique, these dancers have also achieved a refinement in their performance quality, an entity much more elusive to satisfactory articulation than the level of technical skill or body control achieved. Likewise, contemporary dancers may not be awarded such a title without this 'something extra' in their dancing, but unlike ballet dancers, supreme technical skill is not necessarily a prerequisite pending consideration for the highest level of esteem. This is not to say that ballet dancers are not required to have this 'something extra', but based on ballet's heritage, the 'something extra' appears to arise from the execution of the technique and its inherent quality. At the very least, a ballet dancer must have the technique before any consideration for the supreme status of prima ballerina or premier danseur can occur. By virtue of contemporary dance's celebration of difference and individuality, it appears that the 'something extra', this 'je ne sais quoi', can equally be a measure of a contemporary dancer's overall ability, as can their physical proficiency. One survey respondent's reasoning for preferring to watch contemporary works, illustrates this difference in the value judgement criteria for the two genres. "Ballet has to be done brilliantly to be nice to watch, contemporary is more interesting at any level" (QUT dancer, Student Dancer Survey).

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moving [end] and fewer motor units are needed to perform the action. The movement is easier (ibid. 1996, p. 111, 112).

[22] That is presently ignoring any philosophical debate about the nature of sensation and perception.

This definition between the dance styles springs from each genre's respective culture and history. Ballet, with its origins in the court dances of Europe, developed from a tradition of exhibition. Dance was used as socio-political tool, whereby adept execution of the most current steps, was a routine part of maintaining status on the social and political ladder. This need to satisfy external appearances is indicative of ballet's predilection for spectacle and virtuosity. Today, the 'arms race' in physicality and virtuosity (more turns and higher jumps) could be viewed as a reflection of the aristocracy's quest for socio-political survival, undertaken through their vigilance to stay current and proficient in the latest dance fashion. Primarily, ballet appears to concern itself with the technique and the perfection of the look. Such an impression of ballet is demonstrated by the response to the student and professional level survey question, 'what does 'getting it right' mean to you when you are doing a ballet class?' The predominant response was that 'getting it right' concerned being technically correct, in a physical sense, though a few respondents also suggested achieving a certain aesthetic look was their main concern. "Ballet has emphasis on perfection and ideal, so 'getting it right' is being as close to that ideal as possible" (WAAPA dancer, Student Dancer Survey).

As detailed previously, contemporary dance originates from a philosophy of exploration and experimentation, where the journey and process of discovery may almost be paramount. Arising from a desire to question established values, the genre's promotion of individualism opened the way for innovators to not just deny ballet and to dance however they pleased, but to not dance at all, or to waive the use of music, or to perform in pedestrian attire, or use and manipulate the medium of live dance performance in whatever way best expressed the intentions of their work. It is this 'free reign', no rules mentality that subsequently allows a choreographer to pick a less technically proficient dancer over a highly skilled technician, because they have some other quality such as a particular focus, a presence or a personality trait. Such a quality is not necessarily definable and, therefore, does not easily avail itself to discussion. In effect, the choice of a dancer on the basis of such a quality is purely subjective on the part of the choreographer, teacher or even audience member, who acknowledges the dancer's technical mediocrity, but states that the appeal lies in the dancer's possession of a certain 'je ne sais quoi' quality.

While it is undeniable that a high level of body control is desirable in a contemporary dancer, it appears that this attribute is on more of an even par in importance with the subjectively judged 'je ne sais quoi' quality. This suggestion is supported by the dance student survey. Answers indicate that the genre's acceptance of individual differences and generally wider scope, was the reason for so many students preferring to dance contemporary (63%, RR = 85%) instead of ballet. "[In contemporary] there is more room for personal interpretation" (AIT dancer Student Dancer Survey).

Any good performer should have command of their instrument as well as a unique quality in their performance, but the philosophy of contemporary dance allows choreographers the choice to incorporate whatever furthers their vision, and their choice of personal, subjectively judged qualities over objectively assessed body control, validates personal qualities as a measure of a contemporary dancer's ability.

Thus we return to subjective measures of dance ability, which, being inconsistent across individuals as discussed earlier, can create a precarious state of uncertainty for the dancer. With such a shifting scale, where judgement of dance ability is more or less determined by personal opinion and personal taste, a dancer is left without a definitive way of knowing how good they are or if they are 'getting it right' as a dancer. One audience member/teacher/choreographer may think a particular dancer is spectacular and another observer may completely disagree, leaving the dancer to wonder where they really stand on the continuum of ability. Yet, if dance predominantly resides in the subjective domain, then one opinion is just as valid as the next, and one opinion can be just as easily discarded as the next as well. Such is the defense mechanism adopted by many performers upon reading a bad review. Convincing themselves of the unimportance of one view, especially in lieu of their own opinion, they ignore the bad reviews. Such nonchalance is a thin disguise however, as performers are all too ready to be affected by and place great store in a good review. On hearing that a reviewer attended the show, most performers are eager to read what is written, belying an underlying desire to know what others think of them, mostly to know if the response was positive. The question that now arises is why do dancers care about external validation?

Dancers & External Validation

The purpose of artistic expression varies over time and culture. Predominantly, the purpose of theatrical dance appears to oscillate between functioning as a medium of communication and communion, and as a mode of personal fulfillment and self-actualization, responsible to no one but the practitioner.

The most pertinent distinction here is the functioning of dance on an externally based framework for external purposes, where dance is an event involving conscious interaction with others, as opposed to dance functioning on an internally based framework for the internally based purpose of individual gratification.

The pursuit of external approval appears to feature more importantly as an intention in ballet and less so in contemporary dance. From the French nobility's preoccupation with appearances and hierarchy, ballet equally developed its requirement to satisfy externally prescribed criteria, as judged by others (as opposed to judged by the self). The protocol of court performances dictated that it was improper to ever turn one's body away from the Royals, thus the body should 'turn out' towards the audience at all times, allowing maximum viewing potential. This rationale and subsequent development of ballet technique and ballet works, suggests that ballet's primary purpose is the enjoyment and satisfaction of its audiences.

In contrast, contemporary dance has possibly evolved to epitomize dance as a mode of personal fulfillment and self actualization, and less as a genre primarily concerned with satisfying external objectives and standards, either within the contemporary dance genre, or the wider domain of dance as a performing art[23]. Despite contemporary dance's dedication to self-reflection and internalism however, the genre's practitioners have not been completely insular in their approach. While personal in their origins and motivations, the works of the early modern dancers, such as Duncan, Wigman, Humphrey and Graham, expressed themes and emotions that were widely accessible to their viewers. Audience appeal may not have been a conscious intention in their works, but it is doubtful that the aforementioned dancers would have objected to audiences being stimulated or affected on some level, otherwise why perform for others at all? As previously outlined, this concern with content and meaning was challenged by the Judson dancers, who resolutely asserted that dance does not have to mean or communicate anything. However, even the Judson dancers would probably have positively accepted viewers departing more enriched after their works, even if this effect was unintentional.

[23] Consider the challenge issued by Cunningham and the Judson dancers concerning what components 'should' be present in a dance work and the performance of a dance work.

Today, contemporary dance no longer scoffs the conveyance of meaning as a 'legitimate' intention of a dance work, but possibly more now than ever, the genre primarily concerns the dancer, and the way in which contemporary dance can contribute to the individual's evolution as a dancer and/or as a person. This mentality however, is not specific to contemporary dance. Socio-cultural trends are again evident in cultivating this attitude. In a sense, society has caught up with contemporary dance's acceptance of individual differences, possibly as a result of the increasing multi-culturalism in various western societies and the development of the 'global' world concept. The occidental, individualist cultures around the world are very much in an era of "me-ism" in which "I feel", "I think" and "my journey" are the priorities. This thinking is reflected in many aspects of culture and especially exemplified in advertising and marketing, where consumers are encouraged to embrace the flexibility of the product and 'do it their way!' Another example of this cultural trend, while perhaps arbitrary in its timing, is the research into and implications of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which asserts that "everyone possesses a number of intellectual potentials or 'intelligences'"(Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 247) some of which may be developed further than others. This 'individual differences' approach has been embraced by educators as a revolutionary framework on which to formulate more effective methods of teaching and learning[24]. The repercussions of this accepted "me-ism" in the artistic world are that perhaps we practise our art first and foremost for ourselves. Yet we still care about external validation. Why?

It could be argued, that a dancer's drive to seek external acknowledgement or verification of their ability and worth as a dancer might originate from something more basic in human nature. Historical examples, from Christopher Columbus discovering the New World to Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, indicate that humans are inquisitive by nature. Returning to the beginnings of evolution and the vast impact of the development of language on the survival and propagation of the human species, it is suggested that our urge to know and understand the surrounding world is motivated by our survival instinct. By knowing and understanding the world, we can create the most effective and beneficial interaction with it. As previously outlined, our ability to know and understand the world is aided by our capacity to begin forming schemas from birth. These "mental representations of what we know and expect about the world" (Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 308), expand with experience and knowledge and in effect supply a framework by

[24] Gardner first published *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences* in 1983. A tenth anniversary edition has since been published.
"Gardner focused on how people learn and use symbol systems like language mathematics and music. He asked, Do these systems require the same abilities and processes – the same "intelligence"? According to Gardner the answer is no. He believes everyone possesses a number of intellectual potentials, or "intelligences", each of which involves a somewhat different set of skills. Biology...provides the raw capacities for each of these intelligences; culture provides symbolic systems- such as language – that enable people to use their raw capacities. Although the various intelligences normally interact, they can function with some independence, and individuals may develop certain intelligences further than others. The specific intelligences that H. Gardner proposes are (1) *linguistic*...(reflected in good vocabulary and reading comprehension), (2) *logical-mathematical*...(as indicated by skill at arithmetic and certain kinds of reasoning), (3) *spatial*...(seen in understanding relationships between objects), (4) *musical*...(as in abilities involving rhythm, tempo and sound identification), (5) *body-kinesthetic*...(reflected in skill at dancing, athletics and eye-hand coordination), (6) *intrapersonal*...(displayed by self-understanding), (7) *interpersonal*...(seen in the ability to understand and interact with others), (8) *naturalistic*...(the ability to see patterns in nature)" (Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 247).

which people can make 'educated guesses', without necessarily having to physically experience whatever is under consideration. While not infallible, this cognitive mechanism has a useful protective application. For example, a child burning his/her fingers on an electric stove will probably be informed of the danger of future proximity to an open fire.

Such reasoning may go some way to explaining why anyone, including dancers, might be concerned with certainty and 'knowing', but as with all things human, generalizations are impossible. Some people need knowledge and certainty, others are able to live with relative ignorance and uncertainty. In psychological theory, this difference is discussed in terms of one's locus of control. The term is "used to refer to the perceived source of control over one's behaviour" (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 401). Those with an internal locus of control "tend to take responsibility for their own actions and to view themselves as having control over their own destinies" (ibid. p. 401). Individuals with an external locus of control "tend to see control as residing elsewhere and to attribute success or failure to outside forces" (ibid. p.401). This theory suggests an explanation for why some people need the certainty and consistency of systems and rules, and why others feel stifled by such constructs. While there is no substantiation for such an idea, it could be suggested that a dancer's locus of control might be influential in their choice of dance style. In an act of self-selection, 'externals' may be drawn to the relatively rule bound and clearly defined genre of ballet, while 'internals' may find the potentially freer, more amorphous contemporary dance more appealing.

While perhaps supplying an idea as to why some people are so obsessed with knowing, this argument does not reveal why these particular people need to know from an external source instead of an internal source, or rather why 'knowing' is attributed to external validation and internal validation is simply one's opinion.

While each person is an individual, we are also a product of the environment in which we live, which, filtered through our family, is the society and culture in which we grow up. Every civilization throughout history has had laws and moral principles, in order to create a harmonious co-existence of its people. Bound by such constraints, a society cannot cater to everyone's happiness at all times, but surrenders the consistent satisfaction of the individual for the greater good. This is perhaps the lesser of two evils. As suggested in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, without the boundaries of civilized society restraining us, we would eventually kill each other.

It is suggested, therefore, that we all (dancers included), are pre-disposed to living in conformity with externally prescribed rules and standards, and therefore, we primarily assess all behaviour (our own and that of others) from this external perspective. This is not to say we are robots without the capacity for free thought, but from childhood we are conditioned to live by externally prescribed rules as imposed and maintained by authority figures, initially parents and teachers.

Children are sent to kindergarten, amongst other reasons, for the purpose of socialization, whereby they learn the initial lessons of peaceful interaction and cooperation. From these externally controlled beginnings, arises a tendency to be conditioned into believing that the way we learn, is through indication of right and wrong from those more experienced than ourselves, which, in the case of early life, again most often means adults[25]. Again, it could be suggested that this behaviour originates from primitive survival instincts. If older members of a group have lived so long then perhaps they know something conducive to longevity that can be taught to children. In this modern day, however, without natural predators, it may not be as necessary to individual survival to take our affirmation solely from others in the first instance. Yet, learning by experience can still be dangerous, a fact of which parents are acutely aware, and so perhaps from early experiences of being externally monitored and directed, we retain into adult life a predisposition to function initially from an external stance. When we do not have knowledge, the tendency is automatically to find someone who does, and while this course of action may be more efficient for immediate purposes, such use of external resources may inhibit the development of self-sufficiency, creativity and confidence to procure solutions and make personal progress.

In the professional dance world, the convention of accepting the views and directions of the authority figure (be they a more experienced dance practitioner or simply the designated director/choreographer for that project) is probably stronger in ballet than in contemporary dance. As detailed earlier, ballet developed from a hierarchical and dogmatic tradition, whereas the philosophy of contemporary dance promotes democracy and a greater freedom to question. Thus, ballet tends to function more from an external perspective, while contemporary is given the leeway to function more from an internal perspective. However, in dance training, the tendency towards learning from external sources, from those more experienced, exists in both genres. Ballet and contemporary dancers therefore, probably have a similar experience in learning their craft through childhood and into tertiary education. This is not to say that independent thought and creativity is not encouraged during training, but rather, metaphorically speaking, one cannot walk without successfully standing first. Due to the experience of training and predominantly learning from external sources contemporary dancers, in professional life, may be just as equally predisposed to functioning from an external perspective as ballet dancers. Furthermore, the majority of contemporary dancers began their dancing lives with the externally inclined ballet[26]. As supported by psychological theory and probably experienced by many, first impressions are often indelible and subsequently colour future experiences.

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[25] It must be remembered that social conditioning and methods of learning are culturally specific. Collectivist cultures, where the influence is on family and community rather than individual goals, teach their children "to respect and obey their elders, and...to do less of the questioning, negotiating and arguing that is encouraged - or at least tolerated – in many middle-class European American families" (Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 324). While maybe more encouraging of the a 'think for yourself' attitude, it is unlikely that parent in individualist cultures are any less protective of their children than parents in collectivist cultures. Therefore it is suggested that parents from individualist cultures might be equally as controlling of their children in early life, as parents in collectivist cultures.

[26] Sixty-six percent (RR = 100%) of dance students began their dancing lives with ballet and 60% of all student dancers (RR = 98%) began dancing [any style] at five years of age or younger (Student Dancer Survey). Similarly, 60% (RR =

The assertion that humans are predisposed to learning from, living by and subsequently judging behaviour primarily from an external perspective is supported by psychological theory. According to human development and personality theory, the people we become is largely determined by the family, society and culture within which we live our lives (especially our early lives). It logically follows, that growing up in an externally controlled environment might predispose us to individually functioning the same way through adult life. Additionally, assuming the majority of others within one society or culture also function predominantly from this external perspective, this behaviour in the individual will tend to be reinforced by the mere exposure effect.

The mere exposure effect states that, unless there is an initial negative response, attitudes towards something will become more positive with increased exposure[27]. One again however, this effect cannot be generalized to all individuals, but it could be suggested that the occurrence of this effect has some basis in survival instincts. The frequency with which something is experienced without ill effect, logically, would eventually precipitate a lowering of defenses and maybe, in time, a welcoming of that experience.

The effect of early life conditioning is that the behaviours governed by externally prescribed rules and standards will eventually, probably occur automatically. It is suggested however, that other human nature/instinct based reasons, of which we are more conscious, may motivate us to seek external validation. Perhaps initially stemming from a 'safety in numbers' instinct, the modern day version may be an emotional one, in that we inherently seek to bond with others. Illustrated by the common experience of missing loved ones when physically separated, this proposed reason for seeking external validation is one of which we may be more conscious. Abraham Maslow suggests in his book *Motivation and Personality* (2nd ed., 1970, In Bernstein &

100%) of the professional dancers surveyed also began their dancing lives with ballet. The professional dancers however, generally started dancing [any style] at a later age with only 30% (RR = 100%) beginning at 5 years or younger (Professional Dancer Survey).

[27] This effect has found substance in a number of fields of psychological study. In the area of consciousness, the mere exposure effect has provided support for the argument that mental processing can occur without awareness. "In one such experiment, participants first viewed a series of unfamiliar block figures...Next, they were shown several pairs of [these] figures and asked to say which member came from the series they had seen earlier. They also stated which figure in each pair they liked better. Their choice about the previously seen figure was correct about half the time, as would be expected by chance alone. However, they tended to like best the figures they had seen before, even when they did not remember having seen them. These responses demonstrated the mere exposure effect, revealing a memory of their prior experience with the figures that was not reflected in their conscious awareness" (Seamon et al. In Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 118). The mere exposure effect is also sited in the area of social psychology with regard to the formation of attitudes and inter-personal attraction. "All else being equal, attitudes towards an object will become more positive the more frequently people are exposed to the object (Seamon et al. In Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 494). One study even found that newborns preferred to listen to stories that had been read aloud while they were still in the womb (Cacioppo, Berntson & Petty. In Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 494). This exposure effect helps explain why we sometimes come to like a song only after hearing it several times – and why commercials and political ads are aired over and over" (Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 494). "One of the most important determinants of attraction is simple physical proximity (Berscheid & Reis. In Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 499). As long as you do not initially dislike the person your liking for him or her will increase with additional contact. This phenomenon – another example of the mere exposure effect...(Seamon et al. In Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 499) – helps account for why your next-door neighbors are usually more likely to become friends than people who live farther from one another. Chances are, most of your friends are people you met as neighbors, co-workers, or classmates" (Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 499, 500).

Nash, 2002) that a need for "belongingness and love" and esteem are strong motivators in human behaviour. Specifically Maslow constructed a hierarchy of needs.

> "Needs at the lowest level of the hierarchy must be at least partially satisfied before people can be motivated by higher level goals. From the bottom to the top of Maslow's hierarchy, these five motives are as follows: 1. *Physiological,*...food, water, oxygen, activity, sleep...etc, 2. *Safety,*...being cared for as a child...having a secure income as an adult...etc, 3. *Belongingness and love,*...being part of various social groups and participating in affectionate sexual and non-sexual relationships, 4. *Esteem,*...being respected as a useful, honorable individual, 5. *Self-actualization,*...becoming all that one is capable of. People motivated by this need...follow interests for intrinsic pleasure rather than for status or esteem" (Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 278).

As in all areas human, this hierarchy is not definitive and many of Maslow's critics have argued his theory is too simplistic.

> "..even when lower-level needs are unmet, some people continue to be motivated by higher level needs (C.S. Hall, Lindzey & Campbell. In Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p. 279). For example, the motivation of people who starve themselves to draw attention to political and moral causes seems to defy Maslow's hierarchy" (Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p.279).

In light of the stressors previously discussed and confirmed by the Dance Career Stressors Survey, dancers are a group that defy Maslow's hierarchy, with many dancers continuing to pursue this career despite the real risk of not successfully fulfilling some of the needs in levels one, two and three. More recent research however, does suggest that happiness cannot be achieved without, amongst other things, "close social ties (especially a satisfying marriage or partnership and good friends)" (Diener; Myers. In Bernstein & Nash, 2002, p.277).

Based on such studies, the suggestion that we function primarily from an external perspective is quite plausible. Certainly in the context of dance, it suggests that there may be a desire for interaction with others through dancing and that dancing is not a purely personal and insular activity. Interaction or communication was cited by some survey respondents as motivating factors for pursuing a career in dance.

> Because dance...combined so many things I was in to; primarily physicality and musicality. But I was also inspired by the challenge of communicating through gesture.
>
> [Dance] Challenges me to communicate clearly with my body...

> ...the magic I would feel getting ready for performance and doing them as I was growing up.
>
> (Dance Career Stressors Survey)

The concept of performance stipulates the presence of another to watch. In essence, it is suggested, that, theatrical dance of any genre inherently concerns itself with human communion of some sort, by virtue of being a performance art. It is suggested, therefore, that a certain amount of externalism is inherent in all forms of theatrical dancing and, for this reason, it maybe an inescapable fact that dancers will concern themselves with the reactions and opinions of others, where the dancer's ability is concerned. This conscious display invites dialogue. Dance is an interactive event.

These may be compelling intellectual arguments but in reality, socio-cultural and economic factors may yield more immediately obvious reasons for dancers to seek external validation. The dance subculture (meaning both ballet and contemporary dance), as well as other performing arts, do not exist in isolation. Art imitates life and maybe vice versa. It is also a fact that the dance industry exists only through the beneficence of predominantly government controlled funding bodies. In this economically rationalized age, external validation therefore may also mean funding. While not the only (and hopefully not the most important) criterion, it is logical to assume that sellout seasons and good reviews are influential in swaying a funding body's decision to grant funds. If this is an influential factor in attracting funding, the pressure to maximize external validation, as measured by audience attendance, is increased, even if only subconsciously. Additionally, attracting large audiences may prove harder still, considering dance's place in the context of modern society and culture. In Western culture complementing "me-ism", we live in a fast paced, fuss-free, no effort, convenience era and with a choice of so many diversions, all performing arts have to fight to retain their place and relevance. A logical result of such a lifestyle is that attention spans are shorter, and that people might be less inclined to make the effort to physically attend and engage with live performance. Such societal attitudes could affect government perceptions and subsequently affect the amount of funding assigned to the arts. In a recent interview with ArtsHub Australia, Australian artistic director Leigh Warren elucidates the challenge of retaining artistic integrity while simultaneously staying current and maintaining public appeal.

> 'I believe that the challenge is to keep your creativity on the edge, but at the same time remain relevant. We've got a bit of motto [at Leigh Warren and Dancers]: that we *do* consider our audience, because that's who we make the work for. We want to challenge the artform, but we're quite happy to say that we'd like to bring a great deal of pleasure to our audience... There is a point at which, if you're not careful, you can become irrelevant.' (Meehan, 2003)

While possibly less of a concern in contemporary dance, where the explorative, questioning nature of the genre avails itself to reflecting modern society and current issues, ballet is apparently faltering in its attempt to stay current and retain appeal. The recent succession of classic old ballets remounted in-the-round could be seen as homage to ballet's royal court origins, where the audience surrounded the performance area[28], but it could also be viewed as a clever marketing strategy to make new and interesting, that which is old and 'known'[29]. Recent articles from the ArtsHub Australia news bulletins also illustrate the ballet world's current concern with its self-image in the 21st century. Aptly titled *Pointe Blank,* an article from the Times Online focused on the future of British ballet, particularly in hindsight of Ross Stretton's failure to modernise the Royal Ballet.

> The battle for ballet's future was fought at Covent Garden, where the Australian Ross Stretton was brought in to modernise the Royal Ballet, a company suffering from years of creative stagnation. In an effort to attract a younger, less conservative audience to the Royal Opera House, he introduced to the repertoire ballets such as Mats Ek's indelicate Carmen and Nacho Duato's flaccid Por Vos Muero , the latter a real low point in the Royal's history. "It made a statement," Stretton told me, when asked about the Duato. "It made you sit back and see the dancers of the Royal Ballet in another light." That it certainly did, but not everyone liked what they saw. Within months the Australian was gone, forced out amid growing disaffection with his leadership, both artistic and personal (Craine, 2002).

The article's concluding paragraph states that the artistic directors of Britain's ballet companies, will be able to discuss the future of ballet along with two dozen other artistic directors from around the world, at the conference "Ballet into the 21st Century" scheduled to occur at Snape Maltings in January this year. Conclusions from this conference have been unattainable, but the mere fact that such a conference took place suggests ballet's precarious status in the context of modern western society. Similarly, another article from the Baltimore Sun explores the social perception of ballet as a possible reason for the drop in audience numbers.

> Between 1993 and 2000, attendance in the United States for large ballet companies (with budgets of more than $6 million) fell by 25 percent. Audiences for mid-sized companies (with budgets that are $6 million or less) dropped 18.7 percent, according to Dance/USA. "It is dramatically clear. By all measurements, audiences for ballet are down," said John Munger, research director for the trade group (Mc Cauley, 2003).

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[28] Although performance was always directed at the king and queen. Jonas (1992) suggest that with the "strongly frontal orientation of ballet staging" (p. 131) and ballet's origins in "the European court tradition that directed the performance to the sovereign in attendance" (p. 131), that "classical ballet "in the round" is almost a contradiction in terms" (p. 131).

[29] By 'known' here it is meant relative to other less well known ballets and to contemporary dance which, as indicated by the Professional Dance survey, is less well known by the general public than ballet. Ninety percent (RR = 90%) of professional dancers think the general public have a better understanding of ballet than contemporary dance

The effect on the individual dancer of existing in this atmosphere of societal ambivalence towards dance, in terms of motivation to seek external validation, is probably not direct. Rather this atmosphere directly applies pressure to the whole performing arts industry to seek external validation, and justify its existence, in the context of government budgets. Indirectly however, dancers may exist in a heightened state of sensitivity regarding the fragility of their career and the need to be constantly aware and assertive in finding opportunities to further their career. Now, especially with the disproportionate number of employment opportunities, perhaps the ultimate repercussion of existing in this context is that dancers of both genres, are compelled to concern themselves more with external validation than internal validation. Dancers have to dance, but without personal capital this goal may only be realized by achieving validation from those in the position to offer the opportunities.

(Professional Dancer Survey).

Conclusion

While ballet dancers in the first instance strive to adhere to a tradition and create a faithful reproduction of a 400 year old form, contemporary dancers struggle to achieve a standard, while maintaining pace with the constantly changing and innovating movement forms, intentions and standards that exemplify the contemporary dance ethos. Theoretically, there is a difference in the 'artistic anxiety' potentially experienced by ballet dancers compared to contemporary dancers. For ballet dancers, anxiety stems from the need to conform, for contemporary dancers, anxiety arises from the lack of conformity and the consequent need to be always informed of the latest standard, and to be as multi-skilled and diverse in their talents as is the genre.

Though mediated by individual differences, all dancers are, to a degree, predisposed to 'artistic anxiety' by their consuming desire to succeed as dancers. While the specific features of the anxiety differ between the two genres, a commonality lies in the fact that definitions of success and measurements of achievement ultimately lie in the external domain. Perhaps due to a combination of human instinct motivated conditioning and the art form's performance nature, dancers invite discussion about and judgement of their ability.

It is undeniably gratifying to receive resounding applause, or to read positive reviews about one's performance. Intoxicating as it may be however, to overemphasize the importance of such responses can undermine, as much as boost one's confidence, if the subjective nature of dance is not always kept in mind to ground one's perspective. To revel in positive feedback and its suggestion of high level ability may breed complacency, but to ruminate on negative feedback nurtures the potential for destructive psychology. Neither positive nor negative feedback should be attributed too much importance, as once the dancing has concluded, that demonstration of ability is over and, whether good, bad or in between, the work and its dancing will only remain in subjectively perceived, inconsistent memories. Based on humankind's apparent predisposition for assimilating information, it is understandable how instinctually grating it might be to theoretically accept each performance and each judgement of one's ability, as a 'one off' incident, of no further consequence after the event. How then does the individual build a body of knowledge, a history and an identity with which to approach the future?

It is a fine line that dancers walk in accepting or rejecting comment about their performance and yet, like drug addicts, dancers cannot easily give up the dance. Dancers are as much 'adrenaline junkies' as skydivers, constantly pursuing new challenges for the rush of attaining the highest achievement, ultimately, the conquering of themselves, physically, mentally and emotionally. The unfortunate aspect lies in the tendency for the success of the conquest to be, if not wholly determined by, then certainly influenced by the opinions of others. Thus, the dancer may live a junkie's life; the highs are unsurpassable and the lows are potentially soul destroying,

> At a national level, swimming netball and cricket have embraced sports psychology...[and] it is integrated into training programs at the AIS...What sports psychologists do is teach athletes to think about their thinking...her [sports psychologist Wendy Swift] job is to keep the athletes mentally prepared for not only doing their best in their sport but for everyday life..."I [Wendy Swift] prepare athletes to be self sufficient and handle unexpected events" (Maguire, 2002).

Unlike in sports and athletics, the 'rules' in dance are less defined and replacing concrete concepts of winning and losing, is a continuum of achievement. Dancers therefore, are probably more likely to encounter 'unexpected events' than sports people or athletes.

Considering these facts, it seems even more illogical that the same connection has not been made in dance. Complementing practical dance classes, all of the dance courses surveyed include compulsory units of anatomy and kinesiology to impart knowledge, thus enabling dancers to use their bodies with maximum safety and efficiency. Why then have compulsory units of dancer specific psychology not been implemented for the same purpose, to give dancers the knowledge and the skills to navigate their way safely and efficiently through the mental and emotional roller coaster, that seems especially inherent in a dance career?

From personal experience, dancers are an intelligent and perceptive group of people. A probing mind and a keen sense of observation are often the starting points for dance works, and through involvement in these works, dancers extend explorations of their bodies and minds. Despite this, I argue that it would only benefit dancers to have the existence and power of their minds formalised during dance training. Not only would such an education help temper the occurrence and severity of 'artistic anxiety' and the effect of the discussed occupational stressors, but such knowledge would empower dancers to maintain their sense of inner conviction within the predominantly externally oriented and dictated nature of dance. With the learned power to control their perception, the dancer can wrest control of their self worth from predominantly and dangerously hinging on external views and reassert the balance between their desire to perform and inspire others, and their own internal sense of achievement.

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Appendices

Student Dancer Survey - Methodology & Materials

Survey Sample

The results of this survey are to be generalized to the tertiary dance student population, from which this sample is drawn.

Specifically ten dance students were to be randomly selected from second year of each of the following courses: Advanced Diploma of Performing Arts (Dance) (Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts [WAAPA]), Bachelor of Dance Performance (AIT-Performing Arts [AIT]), Bachelor of Dance (Victorian College of the Arts [VCA]) and Associate Degree (Dance) (Queensland University of Technology [QUT]).

The participants were recruited through the course co-ordinator of each course.

The final sample comprised forty-one participants; ten dancers from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, eight dancers from AIT – Performing Arts, thirteen dancers from Queensland University of Technology and ten dancers from the Victorian College of the Arts.

Materials

The entire questionnaire package per participant contained a participant information letter, instruction sheet, and the questionnaire. The questionnaire took approximately twenty-five minutes to complete and the participants remained anonymous. Completion of the questionnaire indicated consent to participate in the survey.

The questionnaire consisted of seventeen close-ended questions (e.g. Do you train in contemporary dance AND classical ballet as part of your course now? Yes or No.), and twenty six open-ended questions (e.g. Briefly describe your first dance experience.) Responses to close-ended questions were tallied as frequency of answer. Responses to open-ended questions were analysed in line with a predetermined key to isolate key words and themes.

Procedure

The questionnaire was tested in a pilot study by six first-year Bachelor of Arts (Dance) students at WAAPA. Their feedback was considered and the necessary alterations were made to the questionnaire.

Requests for dance student participation in the survey were made to each course co-ordinator via e-mail, along with the questionnaire package for their perusal. Upon acceptance of the survey, questionnaire packages were mailed to VCA along with a Reply Paid envelope. AIT and QUT chose to print the questionnaire packages from the e-mail attachment, and the questionnaire packages were personally delivered to participants at WAAPA by the researcher. Administration of the questionnaire was to ideally take place during an academic class, but final decisions regarding administration of the questionnaire, was at the discretion of the course co-ordinator and the time constraints of each course. Participation in the survey was most likely left to student self selection, with the questionnaire being completed in the students' own time and then sent back all together.

Analysis

The responses from the completed questionnaires from each course were recorded in table form and then summarized in a frequency distribution using Microsoft Excel. Finally the responses from all the questionnaires, across all the courses, were summarized in one frequency distribution and in a written report.

Limitations

It is acknowledged that the survey had some limitations. Firstly the sample size for each course was only between eight and thirteen participants, and it was expected that males would not be equally represented. However, considering the rate of attrition in dance courses, it may be difficult to have a sample with consistently more participants across all courses. Likewise, it appears to be in the nature of the vocation that fewer males choose to pursue a career in dance than females. In this respect, unequal representation of males and females in the sample may be representative of the population to which the results are to be generalized. Secondly, the method of sample selection and questionnaire administration could not be controlled due to time constraints of the dance courses. Self-selection of participation may have biased the randomization of the sample. Thirdly, the questionnaire was self-report based and therefore answers would be coloured by potentially biased self-perception. Lastly the questionnaire was not a standardized questionnaire, in the sense that it has not previously been administered and confirmed for its reliability (a test's ability to measure the same thing and consistently get the same result), and validity (the knowledge that a test is a valid measure of that which it is intended to measure).

Classical Ballet or Contemporary Dance? – Student Dancer Survey

PERSONAL DANCE HISTORY

1. Briefly describe your first dance experience. *(It could have been watching or participating).*

2. How old were you?.....*(years)*

3. Briefly describe your thoughts/feelings/impressions during or after your first dance experience.

4. What style of dancing did you start learning first?

5. How old were you?.....*(years)*

6. Did you take up any other style(s) of dance later on? *(please tick one)*

   - ❑ YES *(please move to **7.**)*
   - ❑ NO *(please move to **10.**)*

7. Please list them and the age (in years) at which you started learning them.

8. Did you take up this/these other style(s).....*(please tick one)*

   - ❑ as well as your first choice,

     OR

   - ❑ instead of your first choice?

9. Why did you take up this/these other style(s) as well as or instead of your first choice?

10. Why did you never try another style of dance? *(if you answered YES to question 6, **do not** answer this question)*

CURRENT DANCE STATUS...THOUGHTS & FEELINGS

11. Do you train in contemporary dance AND classical ballet as part of your course now? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ YES *(please move to **12.**)*
    - ❑ NO *(please move to **23.**)*

12. What does "getting it right" mean to you when you are doing...

    a) A ballet class.

    b) A contemporary class.

13. When doing class, in which dance style do you feel you have a better idea of when you are "getting it right"? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ CONTEMPORARY
    - ❑ BALLET

14. Why do you feel this way in this style and not in the other?

15. Which style of dance do you prefer to dance? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ CONTEMPORARY
    - ❑ BALLET

16. Why do you prefer to dance this style of dance?

17. Which style of dance is your main focus now? (As in the area in which you would like to pursue a professional career.) *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ CONTEMPORARY *(please move to **18.**)*
    - ❑ BALLET *(please move to **18.**)*
    - ❑ NEITHER *(please move to **23.**)*

18. Why did you choose this style over the other?

19. Which style of dance class would you feel more comfortable teaching to those in your class at short notice? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ CONTEMPORARY
    - ❑ BALLET

20. Why?

FUTURE INTENTIONS

21. Assuming you continue on to a career in the style that is currently your main focus, do you see yourself wanting to do regular classes in the other main dance style taught during your tertiary training? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ YES *(please move to **22.**)*
    - ❑ NO *(please move to **22.**)*

22. Why or why not?

WATCHING DANCE

23. Do you attend ballet AND contemporary dance performances? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ YES
    - ❑ NO

24. Do you prefer to watch dance of one style more than dance of the other? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ YES *(please move to **25.**)*
    - ❑ NO *(please move to **27.**)*

25. If yes, which dance style? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ CONTEMPORARY
    - ❑ BALLET

26. Why do you prefer to watch this dance style over the other one?

27. If no.... *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ Do you like to watch each style equally?

    OR

    - ❑ Do you judge each piece as it comes regardless of the dance style?

OUTSIDE PERCEPTIONS OF DANCE

28. When asked your occupation by someone outside of the dance industry or culture, do you say you are a dancer, or do you specify the type of dancer?
    ie. "I am a ballet dancer/contemporary dancer."

29. Is there a specific reason why you answer one way or the other? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ YES *(please move to **30.**)*
    - ❑ NO *(move to **31.**)*

30. If yes, what is the reason?

31. When you tell people that you are a ballet dancer/contemporary dancer, do you feel they have a good idea of what you do? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ YES
    - ❑ NO

Summary of Results for Student Dancer Survey

The total number of participants in the survey was forty-one.

Note: RR = Response Rate.

Who Are You?

The sample comprised; 24% second year WAAPA students, undertaking the 3 year Advanced Diploma of Performing Arts (Dance), 20% second year AIT students, undertaking the 3 year Bachelor of Dance Performance, 32% second year QUT students with 69% undertaking the 2 year Associate Degree in Dance and 31% undertaking the 3 year Bachelor of Fine Arts (Dance), and 24% second year VCA students, undertaking the 3 year Bachelor of Dance.

The minimum age was 18 years old, the maximum age was 26 years old, and the average age was 20 years old (RR = 100%). Eighty-three percent of the sample were female and 17% were male (RR = 98%).

Personal Dance History

Of the 95% who answered Question 1, the most common first dance experience reported was doing a ballet class (41%). The dancers' first dance experience mostly occurred at 5 years or younger (74%, RR = 97%), and most reported that it was a positive experience (61%, RR = 92%).

Ballet was the most common first choice of dance with 66% (RR = 100%), of dancers beginning their dancing lives in this style. Twenty nine percent began with Jazz/Tap/Jazz ballet while only 2% took up contemporary or another style of dance first.

Ninety-two percent of dancers (RR = 98%) began dancing before the age of 11, with **60% beginning at 5 years of age or younger**.

Most dancers took up at least one other style of dance at some point after their first choice (98%, RR = 100%), with 87% (RR = 98%), learning this/these style(s) as well as their first choice. For those who started with ballet, a style from the Jazz/Tap/Jazz ballet category was the most common choice for a second and third style, while those who learnt Jazz/Tap/Jazz ballet first most likely started learning ballet as their second style (RR = 100%).

Of the 93% who answered Question 9, Personal interest (*"It looked like fun."* - VCA) was the most common reason for taking up another style of dance, followed by Dance school related reasons (*"Other styles were offered, so the ballet school suggested them."*- WAAPA).

Current Dance Status...Thoughts & Feelings

One hundred percent of the dancers train in contemporary dance and classical ballet as part of their dance course.

In response to Question 12(a) (RR = 98%), **"getting it right", in a ballet class mainly concerns-**

- **Being technically correct** (*"Landing a jump or turn neatly, without hopping."* – QUT), and,
- Alignment/Biomechanical considerations (*"Feeling correct pelvic and postural alignment during class."* – AIT).

"Getting it right" in a contemporary class predominantly concerns-

- Picking up the exercise correctly (*"Getting the exercise right."*- VCA) (RR = 98%).

Sixty-four percent of those who responded to Question 13 (RR = 88%), **feel they have a better idea of when they are "getting it right", when they are doing a ballet class**, compared with 36% who feel more assured when they are doing a contemporary class.

For those who chose ballet (RR = 96%), the main reasons were-

- **The parameters of ballet are clearly defined and established** (*"Ballet has positions and names for movements, order of class; plies, tendues..."*- WAAPA), and,
- Duration of study (*"I have trained in ballet longer."*- AIT).

The main reasons for feeling more assured in contemporary were-

- Parameter lenience of the dance style (*"Ballet has a prescribed vocabulary, contemporary has a less prescribed vocabulary, allowing more exploration into the movement."* - VCA), and,
- Physical reasons (*"My body is better suited to contemporary."* - QUT) (RR = 92%).

More dancers prefer to dance contemporary (63%), than ballet (37%, RR = 85%). The main reasons for contemporary are-

- **The scope of the dance style** (*"I appreciate the choreographic options and variety it encompasses, more freedom."* – WAAPA, *"There is more room for personal interpretation."* - AIT), and,
- Movement style (*"I feel more free and expressive, just let loose."* - AIT) (RR = 100%).

The main reason for a ballet preference is-

- Personal fulfillment (*"Its what I enjoy doing in life."* - QUT) (RR = 77%).

Most dancers are aiming for a career in contemporary dance (61%), with 26% pursuing a career in ballet and 13% not desiring a career in either contemporary or ballet (RR = 93%). The main reasons for pursuing a contemporary dance career are-

- Personal fulfillment (*"I enjoy it more."* – VCA)
- Physical reasons (*"I don't possess the physical facility to pursue a career in ballet."* - AIT), and,
- The scope of the dance style (*"Contemporary enables the dancer to express him/herself in an individual way, unlike ballet which could be seen as quite regimental, more artistic freedom and personality."* – QUT), (RR = 91%).

The main reason for pursuing a ballet career is-

- Personal fulfillment (*"Ballet satisfies me more."* - VCA) (RR = 90%).

In response to Question 19, more dancers would prefer to teach a ballet class at short notice (66%), than a contemporary class (34%, RR = 91%), with their main reasons being equally-

- Better knowledge of the dance style (*"I have done more ballet than contemporary, I know how the exercises are meant to be executed, I feel I could offer corrections."* - WAAPA), and,
- The parameters of ballet are clearly defined and established (*"The movements are more structured, don't have to think about them as much."* - QUT) (RR = 90%).

The main reason reported for choosing to teach a contemporary class is-

- Level of confidence in the dance style (*"I'm hopeless at ballet."* - AIT) (RR = 100%).

and contemporary focused dancers-

- Describe the scope of the dance style (*"Not ballet, not jazz, the other one, an accumulation of all movement forms."* - AIT)
- talk about Dance companies, and,
- Describe training (RR = 74%).

Life Outside of Dance

Seventy-eight percent of ballet focused dancers (RR = 90%), and 74% of contemporary focused dancers (RR = 100%) have considered another career outside of dance, across a range of areas.

Sixty-four percent of dancers have other qualifications or consider themselves skilled in other areas (RR = 95%). The most common qualifications/skills listed are in Hospitality and Retail (RR = 96%).

Both ballet and contemporary focused dancers reported a range of hobbies, with hobbies in the Sports/Exercise/Active Past times category appearing most frequently (RR =91%).

Professional Dancer Survey - Methodology & Materials

Survey Sample

To be eligible to participate in this survey the dancers had to have trained at the Australian Ballet School and currently practice as contemporary dancers. Contemporary dancer status was defined as someone whose main dance focus now is contemporary dance, and who does not perform in classical ballet works within or without of a classical ballet company. The researcher determined the eligibility of the considered participants, before prospective participants were contacted. Participants were recruited through personal correspondence and at the suggestion of other dance professionals.

The final sample comprised ten participants. Due to the sample size, generalization of results to a population cannot be made from this survey. Each completed questionnaire is to be viewed as a case study.

Materials

The entire questionnaire package per participant contained a participant information letter, instruction sheet, and the questionnaire. The questionnaire took approximately forty-five minutes to complete and participants were assured confidentiality. Completion of the questionnaire indicated consent to participate in the survey.

The questionnaire consisted of twenty-six close-ended questions (e.g. Did you train in classical ballet AND contemporary dance the ABS? Yes or No.), and thirty open-ended questions (e.g. Briefly describe your first dance experience.) Responses to close-ended questions were tallied as frequency of answer. Responses to open-ended questions were analysed in line with a predetermined key to isolate key words and themes.

Procedure

Requests for participation in the survey was made through phone or e-mail contact with each eligible dancer. Those willing to participate were either mailed a questionnaire package and Reply Paid envelope, or e-mailed the questionnaire package. Participants completed and returned the questionnaire in their own time.

Analysis

The responses from the completed questionnaires were recorded in table form and then summarized in a frequency distribution using Microsoft Excel. The data was also summarized in a written report.

Limitations

It is acknowledged that the survey had some limitations. Firstly the sample only comprised ten participants who were not randomly selected. Such a small sample prevents generalization of the results to the greater population. However, recruitment of more participants may have proved difficult due to the somewhat obscure eligibility criteria. Additionally, contacting the ten participants was only possible through the personal acquaintance of the researcher or of the dance lecturers with the participants, therefore finding contacts for further eligible participants may have been difficult. Secondly, the questionnaire was not tested in a pilot study, again, due to the small number of eligible participants. The researcher was unwilling to "waste" one participant by having them test the questionnaire and then complete it again in the official survey, as a preview of the questionnaire would have biased the 'tester' in relation to the other

participants. Thirdly, the questionnaire was self-report based and therefore answers would be coloured by potentially biased self-perception. Lastly, the questionnaire was not a standardized questionnaire, as in the case of the student questionnaire.

Classical Ballet or Contemporary Dance? – Professional Dancer Survey

PERSONAL DANCE HISTORY

1. Briefly describe your first dance experience. *(It could have been watching or participating).*

2. How old were you?.....*(years)*

3. Briefly describe your thoughts/feelings/impressions during or after your first dance experience.

4. What style of dancing did you start learning first?

5. How old were you?.....*(years)*

6. Did you take up any other style(s) of dance later on? *(please tick one)*

   - ❑ YES *(please move to **7.**)*
   - ❑ NO *(please move to **10.**)*

7. Please list them and the age (in years) at which you started learning them.

8. Did you take up this/these other style(s).....*(please tick one)*

   - ❑ as well as your first choice,

   OR

   - ❑ instead of your first choice?

9. Why did you take up this/these other style(s) as well as or instead of your first choice?

10. Why did you never try another style of dance? *(if you answered YES to question 6, **do not** answer this question)*

TERTIARY DANCE EXPERIENCE

11. What was it about ballet that compelled you to be a ballet dancer instead of a contemporary dancer?

12. When you auditioned for the Australian Ballet School (ABS), did you also audition for any other tertiary dance course? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ YES *(please move to **13.**)*
    - ❑ NO *(please move to **15.**)*

13. Were you accepted into any other course(s) as well as the ABS? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ YES
    - ❑ NO

14. Why did you choose to go to the ABS?

15. Did you train in classical ballet AND contemporary dance at the ABS? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ YES
    - ❑ NO

16. What contemporary technique(s) did you train in?

17. From a **technique** perspective, which style of dance did you prefer learning during your time at the ABS? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ BALLET
    - ❑ CONTEMPORARY

18. Why did you prefer learning this style of dance over the other one?

19. From a **stylistic** perspective, which style of dance did you prefer learning during your time at the ABS? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ BALLET
    - ❑ CONTEMPORARY

20. Why did you prefer learning this style of dance over the other one?

POST AUSTRALIAN BALLET SCHOOL TO TRANSITION...

21. Did you complete the course at the ABS? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ YES
    - ❑ NO *(please move to **22.**)*

22. If no, why not?

23. After your time at the ABS, did you dance as a professional ballet dancer in Australia or overseas? *(please tick one)*

    - ❑ YES *(please move to **24.**)*
    - ❑ NO *(please move to **25.**)*

24. If yes, please list the company and the duration of your time there.

25. If no, why not? *(please tick as many as applicable)*

    a) I was not interested in being a ballet dancer anymore. *(please move to **26.**)*
    b) I was not interested in dance per se at the time.
    c) Found there were no jobs.
    d) Other *(please elaborate).*

26. If you ticked (a), please expand on the reason.
    Why were you no longer interested in being a ballet dancer? What aspect of ballet had turned you off the idea?

CURRENT DANCE STATUS...THOUGHTS & FEELINGS

27. Now, do you consider yourself to be...*(please tick one)*

    - ❑ a contemporary dancer
    - ❑ equally both a ballet dancer and a contemporary dancer

28. When did you make this transition to being a contemporary dancer OR practising in both ballet and contemporary dance?

29. Did you make this transition because...*(tick as many as applicable)*

    a) You were no longer interested in being a ballet dancer/just a ballet dancer. *(please move to **30.**)*
    b) There were fewer employment opportunities in ballet.
    c) You had a sustained an injury that is aggravated more by ballet than contemporary dance.
    d) Other *(please elaborate)*

30. If you ticked (a), please elaborate. Why were you no longer interested in being a ballet dancer/just a ballet dancer? What is it about contemporary dance, for you, that ballet cannot fulfil?

31. Are you currently....*(please tick where applicable)*

    - ❑ an independent dance practitioner.
    - ❑ in an independent group/collective.
    - ❑ in a company.
    - ❑ other *(please elaborate)*

41. Do you prefer to watch dance of one style more than dance of the other? *(please tick one)*

- ❑ YES *(please move to **42.**)*
- ❑ NO *(please move to **44.**)*

42. If yes, which dance style? *(please tick one)*

- ❑ CONTEMPORARY
- ❑ BALLET

43. Why do you prefer to watch this dance style over the other one?

44. If no.... *(please tick one)*

- ❑ Do you like to watch each style equally?

OR

- ❑ Do you judge each piece as it comes regardless of the dance style?

OUTSIDE PERCEPTIONS OF DANCE

45. When asked your occupation by someone outside of the dance industry/dance culture, do you say you are a dancer or do you specify the type of dancer?
    ie. "I am a contemporary dancer"

46. Is there a specific reason why you answer one way or the other? *(please tick one)*

- ❑ YES *(please move to **47.**)*
- ❑ NO *(please move to **48.**)*

47. If yes, what is the reason?

48. When you tell people outside the dance industry/dance culture that you are a contemporary dancer, do you feel they have a good idea of what you do? *(please tick one)*

- ❑ YES
- ❑ NO

49. If they ask you to explain further, what do you tell them to help them understand contemporary dance and understand what being a contemporary dancer entails?

50. Which dance style do you think the general public (those outside the industry and culture of dance and performing arts), have a better understanding of/find more accessible? *(please tick one)*

- ❑ BALLET
- ❑ CONTEMPORARY

51. Why?

52. With regard to value judgements of good/bad, right/wrong, in the **area of dance technique**, do you think the general public have an... *(please tick one)*

- ❑ easier time judging ballet works than contemporary works.
- ❑ easier time judging contemporary works than ballet works.
- ❑ same degree of difficulty.

53. With regard to value judgements of good/bad, right/wrong, in the **area of overall artistic worth**, do you think the general public have an... *(please tick one)*

- ❑ easier time judging ballet works than contemporary works.
- ❑ easier time judging contemporary works than ballet works.
- ❑ same degree of difficulty.

54. In an aesthetic context, briefly explain what you think are the fundamental differences between ballet and contemporary dance.

WHO ARE YOU?

55. How old are you?.....*(years).*

56. (please tick one)

- ❑ MALE
- ❑ FEMALE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Only 30% of the participants auditioned for other dance courses when they auditioned for the Australian Ballet School (ABS) (RR = 100%), and of this group 100% were accepted into the other dance courses. The main reason these dancers chose the ABS over other courses was-

- Location and cost (*"The others were overseas, it was cheaper for my parents."*), followed by,
- Seemed a better school, equally with,
- Teacher's influence (RR = 100%).

One hundred percent of the participants reported training in ballet and contemporary dance at the ABS. The main contemporary techniques learnt were Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham (RR = 100%).

In terms of technique, 70% preferred learning ballet while at the ABS, compared with 20% who preferred learning contemporary (RR = 90%). The main reasons for a ballet technique preference were equally-

- Consistency of training in the style (*"The contemporary training was spasmodic, the ballet training was much more intensive, my body was used to the classical form which made it feel better."*), and,
- Personal fulfillment (*"I just enjoyed it more."*) (RR = 100%).

The reasons for preferring contemporary were equally-

- Variety (*"Something different from the never ending ballet classes."*),
- Movement style (*"More freedom of movement."*),
- Scope of the dance style (*"More freedom of personality."*) and,
- Physical reasons (*"I didn't have anything like the ideal ballet body."*) (RR = 100%).

From a stylistic perspective 60% preferred learning ballet while at the ABS, compared with 30% who preferred learning contemporary (RR = 90%). The main reasons for a ballet style preference were-

- Role model company/dancers (*"There was no company performing in the* [contemporary] *style, I had no idea where it could lead, we had the Australian Ballet working in the building."*), and,
- Personal fulfillment (*"I found it more challenging, therefore more satisfying."*) (RR = 100%),

while the main reason for a contemporary style preference was-

- Scope of the dance style (*"The techniques were more open to interpretation unlike ballet which was much more precise and exact, enables me to express myself differently."*) (RR = 100%).

Post Australian Ballet School to Transition...

Ninety percent of the dancers completed the course at the ABS (RR = 100%). The reason why 10% did not complete the course was-

- Auditioned for a company at the end of 2nd year and was accepted (RR = 100%).

After their time at the ABS, 60% of dancers danced as professional ballet dancers (RR = 100%), in Australia and overseas, with most dancers spending some time at the Australian Ballet (RR = 100%). Of the 40% who did not dance as professional ballet dancers, the reason for this was-

- (d) Other

Elaboration revealed the reasons were-

- Wanted to work in a specific company,
- Physical reasons and,
- Personal identification (*"My tastes had broadened to a mix of contemporary and ballet."*) (RR = 100%).

Current Dance Status...Thoughts & Feelings

Forty percent of the sample now consider themselves to be contemporary dancers, while 40% consider themselves to be equally ballet and contemporary dancers (RR = 80%).

Twenty five percent of the dancers made this transition less than five years ago, 25% made the transition five or more years ago, 13% made the transition on graduating from the ABS, and 36% made the transition on joining a specific company (RR = 100%).

The main reasons for this transition were-

- (a) No longer interested in being a ballet/just a ballet dancers, and,
- (d) Other

Elaboration of (d) reveals the primary 'other' reason for the transition was-

- **Scope of the dance style** (*"More interested in what the technique [contemporary], would allow me to tackle as a performer, more realistic/darker? works, the rigidity of ballet was beginning to bore me."*) (RR = 100%).

For those who ticked (a), extension on their answer indicates that-

- Scope of the dance style (*"Contemporary allows me to express myself more diversely than in ballet works."*), equally with,
- Personal fulfillment (*"I find I can express myself emotionally better through contemporary."*),
- **Role of the dancer** (*"In a ballet company you're not treated like an artist, you're more like a paintbrush."*)

are the reasons why they were no longer interested in being ballet/just ballet dancers (RR = 100%).

Fifty percent of the dancers are currently in a company, 30% are independent dance practitioners and 20% fall into the 'other' category (RR = 100%).

Thoughts on Ballet vs. Contemporary Now

Of the 90% who responded, 70% try to do regular ballet class as well as contemporary class, with the primary reasons being equally-

- Maintain versatility and,
- Company requirement, followed by,
- Ballet is a consistent technical foundation (*"Ballet has a strong technical centering in a simple format."*) (RR = 100%).

The reason for the 20% who do not do regular ballet class as well as contemporary class is-

- I no longer do class regularly (RR = 100%).

When doing a ballet class-

- Exercise execution considerations (*"Moving the whole body in a smooth, fluid way, musicality/phrasing, being clean, finished."*), and,
- **Being technically correct** (*"Turn out, positions, lines, turns, jumping high."*),

are the main concerns for "getting it right" (RR = 70%).

When doing a contemporary class, "getting it right" means-

- Exercise execution considerations (*"Same as for ballet and replicating the teacher's/choreographer's intentions for their movement."*) (RR = 70%).

Ninety percent (RR = 100%) of the sample feel their judgement of when they are "getting it right" is equally good in both ballet and contemporary class. Ten percent feel they have a better idea of when they are "getting it right" in ballet, with the reason being-

- Duration of practice (*"I believe I have a better "body" understanding of how ballet feels due to the fact that I do it almost every day and I started at such a young age."*) (RR = 100%).

If asked to teach at short notice, 40% of the respondents would feel more comfortable teaching ballet, 40% would feel comfortable teaching either ballet or contemporary, and 20% would not feel comfortable teaching either style (RR = 100%). The primary reason for the ballet teaching preference is-

- Better knowledge of the dance style (*"It's the class I've done daily for 21 years."*) (RR = 100%).

Watching Dance

One hundred percent of the dancers attend both ballet and contemporary dance performances. Sixty percent (RR = 100%) do not prefer to watch dance performances of one style more than dance performances of the other style, with 17% enjoying each style equally and 83% judging each piece as it comes regardless of style (RR = 100%). Of the 40% who do have a preference, 100% prefer to watch contemporary dance performances instead of ballet works. The two main reasons for a contemporary dance preference are equally-

- Personal identification (*"If its good I have a connection at an emotional and intellectual level which I don't have with ballet."*), and,
- Personal fulfillment (*"Quite often the ideas interest me more and the dancers are more individual."*) (RR = 100%).

Outside Perceptions of Dance

When asked their occupation, most dancers (50%, RR = 70%), say 'dancer' with only 20% specifying 'contemporary dancer'. Seventy-one percent (RR = 100%) of dancers have a specific reason for answering the way they do. For those who simply state 'dancer' the reasons are equally-

- Avoid misunderstandings about the nature of the profession,
- Depends how I'm feeling, and,
- Indicates diversity of ability (*"Using the term dancer is a generalisation, to say you're a dancer these days you have to be diverse and dance all styles."*) (RR = 100%).

For those who answer 'contemporary dancer', the main reasons are-

- Make the distinction as to which style I now practice in and,
- Avoid misunderstandings about the nature of the profession (RR = 100%).

Having told people that they are a contemporary dancer, 80% (RR = 100%) of dancers feel these people do not have a good idea of what they do. If asked for further explanation about their occupation, the most common answer is-

- Describe the scope of the dance style (*"It is an amalgamation of artforms and styles, issues dealt with are of our times."*), followed by,
- Dance companies equally with,
- Draw parallels with other artforms (*"I use painting as an analogy, "...there are landscapes and portraits...and then there are those weird paintings*

where paint has been splattered all over the canvas, well that's what I do.") (RR = 80%).

Ninety percent of dancers (RR = 90%), think the general public have a better understanding of ballet than contemporary dance, with the reasons being-

- Longer history,
- Better exposure (*"'High' art is economically privileged, therefore more visible."*), and,
- Simple format (*"Usually there is a simple plot that the uninformed would find quite obvious to understand."*) (RR = 100%).

In the area of dance technique, 70% believe the general public have the same degree of difficulty in judging good and bad, while 20% believe the general public have an easier time judging ballet works than contemporary ones (RR = 90%). With regard to judging the overall artistic worth of dance works, again, 70% of dancers believe the general public have the same degree of difficulty with works of each style, while 20% believe they have an easier time judging ballet works (RR = 90%).

From the 70% who responded, the three fundamental differences between ballet and contemporary dance are-

- Parameters of ballet are clearly defined and established (*"Ballet tends to have a certain number of elements that are always used in some form or other, and we judge its worth by the quality of those elements, contemporary tends to call on numerous and at times opposing elements that can be structured in almost limitless ways, contemporary dance changes much faster."*),
- Contemporary is current (*"Ballet is fairytale, contemporary can be more real."*) and,
- Intention of the dance style (*"Ballet pursues the extreme beauty in the limited forms, contemporary pursues the extreme sensibility in the unlimited forms, ballet is all about formal lines and look, whereas in contemporary, though its important to make clear pictures, you have much more freedom."*).

Dance Career Stressors Survey – Methodology & Materials

Aim: To determine the rate of incidence and nature of several occupational stressors, as identified by the researcher.

These stressors fall into the categories of Physical Injury, Psychological issues, Relationships, Financial considerations and Social perception.

Survey Sample

The sample comprised six dancers, recruited for the survey through personal acquaintance with the researcher. The criteria for participation in the survey was that the dancer had worked as a professional dancer on a number of paid or un-paid projects since graduation.

Due to the small sample size, the answers from each survey are to be viewed as case studies. It should also be noted that all of the dancers are contemporary dancers.

Materials

The questionnaire was a loosely structured guide, formulated to facilitate the interview process. It contained a combination of open and close-ended questions, with approximately 36 questions in total.

Procedure

Prior to commencement of the interview the participants were assured that their answers would be confidential.

Completion of the questionnaire took place through a semi structured interview process in person and via telephone.

Analysis

Answers were recorded directly into the researcher's computer, onto individual copies of the questionnaire. Participants were then assigned identification codes (i.e. D1 = Dancer 1). The results were then summarized on one copy of the questionnaire.

Summary of Results for Dance Career Stressors Survey

Note: The researcher has only recorded the main themes of each answer. Some of the original wording has been altered to facilitate this word efficiency.

Why did you choose to pursue a career in dance?

D1 – Did routine aerobics in Yr. 7. Teacher thought I was good and encouraged me to pursue something movement based. Mum booked me in for a ballet class and after doing it I liked it, I liked the people I met through dancing. Enjoy the physicality, the sense of freedom in the dancing but also in the scene.

D2 – The sheer joy of moving my body. Finding the freedom through movement. The magic felt seeing shows as a child and in getting ready for performance and doing them as I was growing up. Wanted to move people through performance, inspired by the challenge of communicating through gesture.

D3 – Loved to dance, knew I could commit to it cos I loved it so much. It was a progressive choice with regard to dance a career. Dance was something I had to do every day to feel satisfied. Challenges me to communicate clearly with my body, with my speech through the process of making works with colleagues and in teaching.

D4 – Cos biotech seemed a bit dreary. Just figured I'd do the [dance] course and see what happened. Liked being the centre of attention, liked the challenge, the physicality, the beauty, performing.

D5 – Felt right, enjoy the constant challenge. Like putting ideas out there and seeing the feedback, like performing, seeing people's reactions, taking risks.

D6 – I loved dancing. I did it [dance course] cos I figured I could always do other uni study later. I think I get off on the challenge.

How old were you when you started dancing?

D1 – 12, **D2** – Calisthenics 2 ½, Ballet 8, **D3** – 7, **D4-** 3, **D5** – 5, **D6-** 6

What style of dance did you begin with?

D1 – Ballet
D2 – Ballet
D3 – Ballet, then discovered tap and jazz were more my thing.
D4- Ballet
D5 – Ballet
D6- Creative movement. (was in Solomon Islands), did Island dancing too. Started ballet back in Australia, age 8.

Did you ever give it up, or have you pretty much danced consistently since you started?

D1 – Never gave up.
D2 – Gave it up a couple of times. Sometimes out of choice, other times due to external factors.
D3 – No, never.
D4- Yes just kept going.
D5 – Gave up between 5 and 9. Started dancing again with jazz and tap.
D6- Consistently.

Did you play sport/learn an instrument, or engage in any other interests or hobbies to the same degree that you danced?

D1 – No, dancing basically took over.
D2 – Yes, Gymnastics and clarinet.
D3 – Always been musical, but nothing to the same degree.
D4- Not to the same degree.
D5 – Violin, and netball pretty much as regularly.
D6- Athletics, but not to the same degree. Choral groups nearly to the same degree.

If yes, do you still engage in that/those past time(s)?

D1 – No.
D2 – Yes but very infrequently.
D3 – Play guitar.
D4- Not really.
D5 – No.
D6- No.

****

How many serious acute or chronic injuries have you had?

D1 – 1, **D2** – 14, **D3** – 3, **D4-** 6, **D5** – 3, **D6-** 3

How well did it/they heal? Strength? Range Of Movement? Pain?

1 – Very well, 2 – Well enough, 3 – Borderline, 4 – Terribly

D1 – Well enough
D2 – Very well
D3 – Well enough
D4- Well enough
D5 – Well enough
D6- Terrible and Borderline

Did you see a health care professional about this/these injuries?

D1 – Yes, **D2** – Yes, **D3** – Yes, **D4-** Yes, **D5** – Yes, **D6-** Yes

What type of health care professional?

D1 – Physiotherapist, Bone scans etc.

D2 – Physios, sometimes Chinese medicine.

D3 – Physios, remedial massage, acupressure massage, chiropractors, yoga, osteopaths, acupuncture, pilates.

D4- Chiro's, Osteo, massage, physio.

D5 – Physios and chiro.

D6- Osteos, physios, masseurs, acupuncture, GP, Chinese herbalist, homeopath.

In general were you satisfied with the treatment you received for the initial injury, ongoing rehab, general support and understanding of the professional?

D1 – Sometimes, sometimes not. Sports physios had no idea of the strains of dancing, bit skeptical of the rehab they suggested.

D2 – Yes.

D3 – Yes and no, diagnosed myself a lot of the time. Strange how I go and talk and they just agree.

D4- Yes, except the physio.

D5 – No, they didn't understand dance injuries, and were unsympathetic to how attached dancers are to their vocation.

D6- Totally varied, in general no. Didn't seem to understand the fine tuning in dance, therefore the types of injuries.

****

In relation to your dance training and/or subsequent career, have you ever experienced performance anxiety, motivational problems, depression or insecurity?

D1 – Just general nerves with performances. Yes motivational problems. Yes depression.

D2 – Yes

D3 – Basic nerves, depression a little when I have breaks between dancing, when I'm just exhausted cos of the sacrifice dance requires sometimes.

D4- Insecurity.

D5 – Usual nerves, motivational problems, depression and insecurity.

D6- Insecurity, motivational problems, depression from lack of employment.

Physical symptoms?

D1 – Couldn't sleep properly. Put on a lot of weight too. Concentration wasn't good, was quite irritable.

D2 – Vomiting, diarrhoea, sweaty palms, shaking. Once just didn't turn up for a show. So insecure I just couldn't perform that day.

D3 – Neck goes funny when I'm stressed, sometimes when I'm being too successful my body sabotages me and I have an injury, restless sleep but not too bad.

D4- Sleep, appetite disturbance, emotional ups and downs.

D5 – No

D6- Have had complete physical break down, crying, shaking, hyperventilating, loss of vision.

What caused it? Injury? Lecturer/choreographer? Self? Other?

D1 – Injury. [Living] circumstances, Choreographer/company.

D2 – Self. Or comment by director, that triggered it.

D3 – Extremes, lack of dancing or too much dancing. Quite disturbed when I get injured.

D4- Choreographers, co-performers, self.

D5 – Choreographer.

D6- Mainly self, choreographer once. Lack of employment is the cause of motivational probs and depression.

If self, please elaborate, can you explain why or how you talked yourself into this state?

D1 – N/A

D2 – Mind games that you play on yourself.

D3 – N/A

D4 – Triggered by outside influences, play mind games with myself. I have very high expectations of myself.

D5 – N/A

D6 – Just perfectionism, wanting to be the best I can.

****

Have you ever experienced a negative response from your family with regard to your choice of career?

D1 – No not really, they've been supportive or quietly accepting.

D2 – No. They don't get it but they're supportive.

D3 – Not with close family, they're totally supportive. Had mum's parents say why don't you choose an easier job, one with more money, do a trade, normal jobs.

D4- No, they're very supportive.

D5 – They're supportive but they don't really get it. Think they like the fact that they have this weird daughter. If I didn't have a job they might be more worried.

D6- Extended family yes. Stems from an inability to understand/conceptualise what a professional dancer does all day.

If yes, please elaborate. How? Why?

D1 – N/A
D2 – N/A
D3 – Already explained in previous question.
D4- N/A
D5 – N/A
D6 - They don't see this as a real job, as a serious career activity.

Has your dance training/career ever impinged on or been the source of disharmony in your intimate relationships?

D1 – Yes
D2 – Yes
D3 – Yes
D4- Yes

D5 – What relationships! I haven't had any relationships, cos I've always chosen dance first at this point.

D6 - Not really.

If yes, please elaborate? How? Why?

D1 – 1st relationship. We were in 2 different worlds and I was very focused on the dancing.

D2 – Too busy, they have problems when I'm successful, get left behind. Working with partners has created issues and led to break up.

D3 – Long distance relationships have been caused by dance choices and that has caused a lot of pain and frustration. Has caused a couple of break ups too. I think I don't have long to dance but have a whole lifetime for relationships. Also being too tired physically to participate in other relationship things.

D4- Time factor, attention factor, dance is a very single minded pursuit, hard to have enough brain space to give enough attention to both, the nomadic nature of the profession. The physical exhaustion factor, want to go to my own bed and sleep, if I'm tired I'll injure myself.

D5 – N/A

D6 - Mainly having to travel for work.

Do you have many really close friends outside the performing arts industry? As in people you make an effort to see regularly or stay in regular contact with.

D1 – 2 school friends (guys). 5 others who contact a little less regularly.
D2 – Yes 4.
D3 – Yes
D4- No
D5 – Yes, 2.
D6 - A few from highschool, about 3.

If yes, do you feel they understand what your life as a dancer is about?

D1 – No not really.
D2 – Yes
D3 – To the best of their ability they do, after a point I don't try and explain it anymore.
D4- N/A
D5 – Nup.
D6 - Yes

D3 – Is there enough work in that to live off. What sort of dancing? Curious, ignorant.

D4- What type of dancer? I did ballet when I was 6! 50% positive, 20% indifferent, 30% confused.

D5 – Oh yeah! Confused. Think I'm a stripper.

D6 - That must be fun, how interesting! Basic confusion. Or thinking I mean stripping.

Do you think people outside the performing arts industry in general have a good idea what being a dancer means?

D1 – No, they have some idea about ballet but none about contemporary.

D2 – No

D3 – No, most people don't have any idea what contemporary dance is. They are unaware what a career in dance might be unless it is ballet or musicals.

D4- No

D5 – No

D6 - No

Have you ever encountered, either explicitly or implicitly, misperceptions about being a dancers such as, thinking performing artists are not really skilled, that dance is not a real job, that dancers are unintelligent and that they became dancers because they were not suited to any other career?

D1 – Not really.

D2 – Yes. Kind of logic was dancer, sexy, glamorous, bimbo. Mostly get it from men. "Oh so you get paid to have fun."

D3 – Yes had people assume that I'm a stripper or other men's entertainer. People say how could do a degree dance what is there to study?

D4- Yes, they seem to think it would be an easy career to pursue if they'd wanted to.

D5 – People at Centrelink, the lady said to me, we need to figure out what your career is going to be! Hello I have a degree in dance. General vibe is that people think dancers are vague.

D6 - All of the above. People do seem to think dance is not a high intelligence job.

Or any others I haven't listed?

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How old are you?

D1 – 22, **D2** – 29, **D3** – 26, **D4-** 23, **D5** – 24, **D6** - 22

Male/Female?

D1 – Male, **D2** – Female, **D3** – Female, **D4**- Female, **D5** – Female, **D6** - Female

Where did you do your dance training?

D1 – Centre for the Performing Arts
D2 – University of Adelaide.
D3 – University of Adelaide.
D4- Centre for the Performing Arts
D5 – Centre for the Performing Arts
D6 - Centre for the Performing Arts

When did you graduate?

D1 – 2000, **D2** – 1993, **D3** – 1996, **D4**- 2000, **D5** – 2000, **D6** - 2000

Current dance status? In a company OR Independent Dance Practitioner and/or Freelance dancer.

D1 – Freelance dancer
D2 – Independent Dance Practitioner.
D3 – In a company
D4- Freelance dancer
D5 – Freelance dancer and Independent Dance Practitioner
D6 - Freelance dancer and Independent Dance Practitioner