

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2013 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

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RESEARCHING PERFORMANCE & PERFORMING RESEARCH IN DANCE, MUSIC, THEATRE, AND SPOKEN WORD POETRY

Session Moderator: Juliet McMains, Dance

Meany Studio Theatre

1:00 PM to 2:30 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

De Pie//On Our Feet: Exploring Fandango as a Decolonial Mode of Resistance and Healing

*Iris Crystal (Iris) Viveros Avendano, Senior, Social Sciences,
Evening Degree Program
McNair Scholar*

*Mentor: Angela Ginorio, Gender, Women, and Sexuality
Studies*

Fandango is a centuries old community based musical tradition from Veracruz, Mexico dating from the first half of the XVIII century. With Indigenous, African, and European influences, this tradition takes place around a tarima, a wooden platform where mostly women improvise foot percussion as a group, involving each other and engaging the community in a musical dialogue. The intent of this research is to explore the tarima as a space of female empowerment and communal decolonial praxis. This research uses as its primary method the collection of oral histories from women participants in the fandango tradition in the U.S and Mexico. Considering the community building nature of Fandango and the tarima as an important space for women, it is anticipated that the results of this research will reflect the empowerment women and communities have found through this practice. Moreover, this research focuses on the collection of personal narratives that support this argument to further explore their implications for resistance and healing in response to gender, institutional and social oppression. My interest in theorizing and writing about these oral histories is to elicit examples and create community for other women and individuals who might want to explore community-based arts as a mode of healing and resistance. This research is an important part of a longer project that explores and proposes community-based arts as tools for recovery from trauma and violence prevention for individuals and communities at large. This research will also open the door for other scholars in the field to consider alternative ways of responding to trauma.

Using Dance Concepts in the Classroom

*Nicole Alexandra (Nicole) Rover, Senior, Public
Health-Global Health, Dance: Dance Studies
Mentor: Betsy Cooper, Dance*

Practicing the art and physicality of dance is a beneficial experience that is underutilized in primary education. Previous research, such as Patricia T. Alpert's "The Health Benefits of Dance" and Mabel Elsworth Todd's "The Thinking Body," has shown the benefits of learning dance. The potential values of dancing include working with other people and understanding space, time, and personal empowerment. Yet, many students do not have access to basic dance education and schoolteachers typically do not have the tools to integrate dance in the classroom. The purpose of my research was to identify and define key dance concepts that schoolteachers untrained in dance can implement in their classrooms. Research methods included observing University of Washington introductory dance classes and asking local professional dance instructors what they find to be most important and effective in their dance classes. The data collected was then used to draft a guide for the implementation of basic dance concepts into public school classrooms. The guide is written for teachers without previous formal dance training and takes limited budgets and time constraints into consideration. This allows teachers to learn dance concepts and exercises and confidently teach these to their students in the classroom. I hope the findings from this research will bring dance to students who otherwise would not have such an opportunity to learn and receive the numerous benefits dance offers.

Jesus and Spoken Word Poetry/Dance: The Cross

*Michael Masayuki Fujimoto, Senior, Psychology
Mary Gates Scholar*

Mentor: Juliet McMains, Dance

It may be uncommon to associate Christianity with spoken word poetry (poetry that is recited aloud, usually involving

a dynamic, theatrical, and urban feel) and dance (esp. street dance). However, several young artists are using urban art forms as a means of cultivating and sharing their faith. This project explored the relationship between the Christian faith and spoken word poetry and dance via the ethnographic research process. Questions that guided my research included: How can the faith and art forms be used together as impactful forms of outreach? Why is poetry and dance valuable to the church? How can Christian poets and dancers successfully engage their audience? The ethnography consisted of interviews and public observations of eight Christian spoken word poets and dancers in addition to reflections on the researcher's own performance practice. As ethnography is described to be an "encounter of differences", I have come across new findings that revealed my own biases about how Christianity and the two art forms intersect. Even as an insider to Christian spoken word poetry/dance, my views have been challenged, deepened, and broadened by this work. For instance, I have gained a greater understanding for certain ways a Christian performing artist can be successful in outreach by: 1) clearly conveying how the faith has enabled their own life changes 2) "being real" in sharing important, yet difficult aspects of one's life to others 3) performing with excellence and 4) reaching out to the audience offstage. In this presentation, I will strive to acknowledge and represent the many different findings I have come across in seeking to develop a more comprehensive and evolving understanding of the relationship between the Christian faith and spoken word poetry/dance.

Japanese Drum, American Spirit: The Tradition of Taiko in Seattle

Adrienne Millennia (Adrienne) Litman, Senior, Psychology, Dance: Dance Studies
Mentor: Betsy Cooper, Dance

A performing art form originally from Japan, Taiko drumming has been embraced by Japanese Americans as a way to pass down cultural values. In the Seattle area alone, there are nine Taiko groups that perform regularly and two youth Taiko groups. Although research has examined the role of Taiko in the Canadian Japanese community, little research has looked at Taiko in the Japanese American context. My research looks at the role of Seattle Taiko groups in passing down the tradition of Taiko to future generations. My methodology involved participating in a beginning class held by Seattle Kokon Taiko and observing how the teacher introduced the cultural context for Taiko. In addition, other students in the class were interviewed about why they decided to take the Taiko class. For students of Japanese ancestry, the desire to connect back to Japanese culture is likely a prominent reason for taking the Taiko class. The results of this research will contribute to understanding of how cultural dances are transmitted in a context that is different from the dance's origin.

Biomechanics of Dance: Breaking and Static Equilibrium

Austin Nguyen, Senior, Biology (Physiology), Dance: Dance Studies
Mentor: Tom Daniel, Biology
Mentor: Betsy Cooper, Dance

Every aspect of nature is governed by the laws of physics. These laws include the basic principle of the center of gravity which is defined as a point in an object's body at which the total net torque due to gravity equals zero. Understanding and applying this basic principle is crucial for dancers if they are to be successful movers. Yet the popular form of dance known as breaking seems to defy the laws of physics, particularly static equilibrium – a state where an object will not rotate unless an external force is applied because the center of gravity is located above an object's base of support. Many breakers are able to perform gravity defying movements as they invert their bodies and hold various poses known as "freezes." Using a series of cameras and a three-dimensional (3D) modeling program, I am able to locate the center of gravity in individual breakers and reveal that their movements do not violate the laws of physics. Using the information collected from this research, I can then propose and create new possibilities for freezes based on the concepts of static equilibrium. This research will be a stepping stone for further biomechanical researches in breaking and other forms of dance. Similar experimental techniques can be used to analyze more complex principles such as dynamic equilibrium – balance while in motion.

The Undergraduate Theater Society

Hannah E (Hannah) Ruwe, Junior, Extended Pre-Major
Ben Phillips, Senior, Political Science, Drama: Performance
Andrew Craig (Andrew) Pritzkau, Senior, Comparative Literature (Cinema Studies)
Mentor: Andrew Tsao, Drama

As theater artists, we must research the human experience through the work of playwrights and group collaboration; because our work dabbles heavily into art, our research is very different from that of an engineering student. Instead of taking a microscope to a petri dish, we take a microscope to the human experience, the rehearsal process acting as our catalyst. We must constantly ask ourselves, why is live theater relevant today? Why is our work important and necessary? Here on campus at the UW, the Undergraduate Theater Society operates as a completely student run production company that has been performing on campus for the past fifteen years, currently in the middle of our sixteenth season. All work is student directed, acted, designed and produced bringing together undergraduates who share a love and passion for creating theater and art. Upon selecting a season, consisting of five shows, each director is unique in their rehearsal process, each is welcome to create their regiment for their actors to

follow. For example, Ben Philips, director of UTS' current show, *Cyrano*, has utilized a diverse array of rehearsal techniques to support his actors; ranging from the Laban effects, to animal behavior exploration to the Linklater Vowel Ladder. The physical demands of the rehearsal process emphasized the importance of "doing" on stage as opposed to "acting" on stage, a concept eternally exploring by undergrads. The final production in the current season *The 39th Steps*, directed by senior Andrew Pritzkau, will draw heavily the work of Alfred Hitchcock, allowing this stage adaption to be continuously influenced by his films. Through these various techniques, the Undergraduate Theater Society seeks to research the human experience through collaborative and exploratory work. In a theater artist's life, especially that of a student, a production is an opportunity to further our education through practical application. This is our research.