

Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2013 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

2Q

INTERSECTIONS: ART, CULTURE, TECHNOLOGY, PHYSICALITY

Session Moderator: Jennifer Salk, Dance

389 MGH

3:45 PM to 5:15 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Women as Warriors; A Transnational and Gendered Perspective on the Mind, Body and Soul of Lucha Libre

Elke Victoria (Elke) Hautala, Senior, Comparative History of Ideas

Mary Gates Scholar

Mentor: Carolyn Pinedo-Turnovsky, American Ethnic Studies

Mentor: Naraelle Hohensee, Comparative History of Ideas

Mentor: Adam Warren, History

Lucha libre, or Mexican Free Wrestling, is both sport and entertainment with strong connections to the history of Mexican cultural production. Employing ethnography, historical research, and media documentation, that includes a film and an interactive art exhibition, my research produced a complex examination of the mind, soul and body of a gendered and transnational identity formation within lucha libre. My earlier ethnographic study of Lucha Libre Volcánica, a local school and performance group, found that male and female performers use physical embodiment and characterization to achieve a fluid gender boundary. Now my focus centers on a specifically female gendered standpoint and the cultural implications on women's roles in US and Mexican society as a result of the sport's transnational migration. Ethnographic research of Princesa Quetzal in Ciudad Victoria, Mexico, Las Poubelles in Los Angeles and La Avispa in Seattle illustrates how their involvement in lucha libre parallels a metaphorical struggle of "la lucha" (the fight) for three possibilities – visibility, empowerment, and a new identity or transnational cultural hybrid. Framing their performances within the historical context of post-revolutionary Mexico and the migratory movement of Mexican culture to Los Angeles and Seattle sheds light on how the perfect climate was created for the development of both lucha libre and female empowerment as evidenced in studies of cultural production by Heather Levi, Jose Muñoz, Laura Gutierrez, Eric Zolov, and Laura Pérez. It will not only open your eyes to the experience of being a female wrestler within a masculine world but also emphasize

the important implications beyond the wrestling ring into the social fabric we all share.

In Pursuit of Posture: The Fallacy of the Straight Spine

Rachel Jean (Rachel) Morin, Senior, Dance, Biology (General)

Mentor: Jennifer Salk, Dance

What is a "straight" spine? What do people mean when they refer to a straight spine in a dance class? Are they talking about a lengthened spine, which can represent a well-supported postural alignment? Unfortunately, an instructor's improper use of language can often lead to a student's misinterpretation, resulting in injuries and life-long alignment problems including less efficient and dangerous movement patterns. Posture and alignment are an important part of every dance class, as they instruct not only how dancers carry themselves, but also how they prepare for and react to movement, however, verbal postural cues vary widely, and have differing amounts of success in achieving a healthy postural alignment in students. By observing classes of multiple levels, styles and ages I have gathered information regarding the language used by dance instructors to describe posture in the classroom. This research, combined with information from dance literature, and clinical language used by physical therapists has allowed me to determine that some verbal cues are more effective than others in eliciting a healthy supported spine in the classroom.

All The World's a Stage: The History of Kanadehon Chushingura

Rebecca White, Senior, Art History, Western Washington University

Mentor: Julia Sapin, Art and Art History, Western Washington University

Among the library of plays known as "classics" within

Japanese theatre, few compare in longevity, versatility, and uniqueness to *Kanadehon Chushingura*. This work weaves the tale of 47 loyal retainers enacting revenge on behalf of their deceased leader by murdering the man responsible for his death. The play draws on themes of loyalty, trust, and righteousness. First debuted in 1748, this story has been adapted hundreds of times into multiple artistic mediums, including kabuki and bunraku theater, woodblock prints, and film. However, unlike most literary classics of the Western World, *Chushingura*'s compelling plot was drawn directly from current events. Through the examination of primary and secondary sources, as well as through close reading of *Kanadehon Chushingura*, I have traced the transition of *Chushingura* from fact to folktale. This research begins with the actual bloody events that inspired the story. I later explore the event's changes and adaptations for the purpose of both suiting its consumption by the merchant class in Edo period Japan, and to evade censorship by the shogunate government. My research concludes by following *Chushingura* into its role within contemporary entertainment. I hope to accurately chronicle the metamorphosis from historical event to contemporary folktale and thus invite others to examine the origins of what they may consider familiar. Doing so will result in a more accurate catalog of our cultural origins for both current and future generations.

Sanctifying Senegal: A Study of the Muridiyya and the Visual Transformation of Space

John Lovejoy, Senior, Art History, Western Washington University

Mentor: Julia Sapin, Art and Art History, Western Washington University

In the urban centers of Senegal, graffiti artists work to deconstruct the memories of the former French colonial apparatus by refurbishing public spaces with new and sacred meaning. These artists belong to the Muridiyya Sufi *tariqa*, an order of Islamic mystics, and the basis of their art is reimagining the only known photograph of the order's enigmatic founder, Cheikh Bamba. This photograph, taken by French authorities while Bamba was under house arrest in 1913, has been used as the matrix image for subsequent representations of the Cheikh. This paper will explore the efforts of those contemporary Murid artists who adorn the city walls of Senegal with Bamba's likeness, relating their endeavors to the writings of social critic Walter Benjamin and cultural theorist Stuart Hall. For the Muridiyya, images of Bamba function as transmitters of his *baraka*, his divine blessings. As a receptacle of this *baraka*, public space is transformed in a process that I will compare to the Muridiyya's appropriation of land controlled by the French during the *tariqa's* formative years: members of the order, the Murids, had initially emigrated into certain areas based upon the proximity to Bamba, and his presence invested the space with new meaning. The

settled land became part of the larger *Daar-al-Murid*, or the House of the Muridiyya, considered sacred and conceptually separate from other spaces in which Bamba's *baraka* could not be felt. Around this space, a communal identity for the Muridiyya was formed, an identity culturally and religiously autonomic. Drawing on the theoretical bases of Benjamin and Hall, concerning respectively the dissemination of images and the circulation of culture, this research will examine the development of a distinct visual culture, highlighting how imagery can reshape and invest public space with new meaning.

Cultures in Motion: Dancers as Diplomats

Natasha Radha (Natasha) Khanna, Senior, Political Science, Dance: Creative Studies

Mentor: Betsy Cooper, Dance

Though one of the tensest times in recent history, the Cold War was also an era of cultural exchange between East and West. Amidst the chaos, American dance companies performed on Russian stages while Russian dance companies toured the United States. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the State Department began sending dance companies to the Soviet Union on cultural diplomacy missions. That practice continued after the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 1965. As the Cold War subsided, the allocation of government funds to send dance companies abroad for diplomatic purposes ended, effectively ceasing government funded dance tours. However, the idea of employing dance as a means of diplomacy has experienced a recent resurgence. In 2010, the US State Department collaborated with the Brooklyn Academy of Music, creating a program called DanceMotion USA. Similar to the Soviet Union tours, DanceMotion USA sends American dance companies to a variety of countries on many continents with the same mission as the Cold War tours: promoting cultural exchange through dance, with dancers serving as diplomats. My research involves giving a historical background of the Cold War tours and comparing those tours with the DanceMotion USA tours currently underway. Using accounts from dancers and dance companies from the Cold War and interviewing company directors with past or future involvement in DanceMotion USA programs, I will investigate the origins of the new interest in sending dancers to other countries with government funding, as well as the implications of using dancers as diplomats. If an art form is able to convey a society's core beliefs and values, can that ability be misused or abused? In other words, if cultural diplomacy through dance becomes a part of the regular government agenda, will it change the art of dance, and its purposes?

**Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice:
Exploring the Application of Education Theory in Dance
Technique Classes**

*Emma Dvorin (Emma) Strong, Senior, Anthropology, Dance:
Dance Studies*

Mentor: Betsy Cooper, Dance

Mentor: Juliet McMains, Dance

A vast amount of research exists in the field of education psychology concerning topics such as brain-based learning, teacher-directed versus student-centered learning, the impact of social and individual factors on the learning experience, and more. Despite this wealth of information, there is often a striking disconnection between the current educational research and the actual experience of students in the classroom. Undergraduate classes, modeled on teaching practices that have been the norm for decades, are often out of sync with contemporary research addressing the scientific and social realities of the learning process. An exception to this phenomenon is observable in dance technique classes in the University of Washington Dance Program. Dance instructors at the UW implement many education theories successfully in their classes, and students reap the positive benefits of these teaching techniques. In order to better understand the teaching methods at work in these learning environments, I conducted observations of UW dance classes and interviewed dance students. Through my research, I have identified key factors that combine to create a classroom environment conducive to learning theory application in everyday teaching. Although the physicality of dance sets it apart from most academic classes, I argue that these same factors could be replicated and utilized in academic classes with similar success. This research is a critical step towards closing the gap between what we know to be effective education theories (and related teaching techniques) and the reality of student experience in many academic classrooms.

The Jazz Aesthetics of Light Gloving

Paul Eschbach, Sophomore, Philosophy, Whitman College

*Mentor: Keith Raether, Office of Fellowships and Grants,
Whitman College*

”Gloving” or ”light-gloving” is the art of manipulating light by means of the hands. Typically, LED microlights are affixed to stretch gloves. The placement of lights on the gloves varies; thumb lights and palm lights are optional. My multimedia presentation links the improvisational movement techniques of light-gloving to the improvisational lines, digressions and interpolations a jazz musician introduces and explores in a solo. In the video portion of my presentation, I and Tom Shellum each take ”solos” using light glove techniques on the composition, ”Rear Control,” by a quartet led by drummer Matt Wilson. Our independent styles of light-gloving are much like the independent lines of improvisation between one jazz musician and another. Each of us picks up

on different cues from the music. We are improvising on improvisation. Light-gloving is, after all, an improvisational art form; like jazz, its essence is found in spontaneous creation.