



# Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2013 Mary Gates Hall

## Online Proceedings

### SESSION 1V

#### 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.

##### **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.

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##### **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 comprehen-

sive and evolving understanding of the relationship between the Christian faith and spoken word poetry/dance.

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#### **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.

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## SESSION 2Q

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### 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.

#### **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?

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#### **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.

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.

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#### **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