WILD THINGS LIVE IN ISAIAH'S GARAGE

DON'T GO INTO ISAIAH'S GARAGE
BECAUSE WILD THINGS LIVE IN THERE.
IT'S DARK AND DUSTY WITH OIL ON THE GROUND.
YOU CAN HEAR THOSE WILD SPIRIT THINGS
MOANING AND GROANING... WEIRD EERIE NOISES...
WITH MEAN REFLECTIONS IN THE MIRROR.
IT SMELLS LIKE SKUNKS SO YOU TITTOE
CAUTIOUSLY, CAREFULLY.

YOU DON'T WANT TO GET LOST IN ISAIAH'S GARAGE.
BECAUSE THE WILD THINGS WILL GATHER ROUND YOU
THAT WILL MAKE YOU START TO SHAKE.
THEN YOU WILL FEAR HIM AND YOU WILL DANCE
AND TWIRL AROUND QUICKLY
TO MAKE SURE NOTHING LURKS IN THE SHADOWS.

WILD THINGS SWING FROM THE RAFTERS.
THEY JUMP DOWN AND DANCE ON THE GROUND.
DUST SWEEPS UP FROM THEIR FEET
AND THE FLOOR CRACKS OPEN.

POWER WALKIN', STOMPIN', BARE FEET STOMPIN',
SEE THE WILD THINGS DANCE.
WILD THINGS, WILD THINGS, WILD THINGS
DANCE ALL NIGHT.

WHEN THEY WANT TO DISAPPEAR FROM SIGHT
THERE WILL BE A STIRR OF SMOKE... AN EXPLOSION...
BECAUSE THEY WANT TO TRICK YOU.
THEY WILL JUST BLOWER AND FACE AWAY...
DISAPPEARING INTO THE CORNER
THAT SITS IN THE CORNER OF ISAIAH'S GARAGE.

Collaboratively written by music teacher Carol Kay and Gr. 3 class of Cord Media
Brower Elementary School, Burnaby, B.C., Canada
Cover Art by Jo Ann Storer
WILD THINGS LIVE IN ISAIAH’S GARAGE: DANCEMAKING IN EDUCATION

by

Cheryl Kay
Bachelor of Arts, Simon Fraser University 1982

THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

In the Faculty
of
Education

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ABSTRACT

This work presents a vision of dance in education which evolves from an embodied understanding of literacy. Awakening students perceptually and providing them with movement opportunities to express ideas and feelings through dance enhances their cognitive, emotional, social and physical development in an integrated way. In education we are not training dancers, but educating students about life through the medium of dance.

I want the joy I experience when I observe student learning in dance to act as a catalyst for educators who do not have the opportunity to study the pedagogy and philosophy of dance education as a specialty, to consider possibilities that arouse students through dance to engage actively in their worlds.

'Wild Things Live In Isaiah's Garage' is a dance that was created in a public school setting in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada. In its creation, students were physically invited to dwell in the imaginative realm, initially with movement followed by writing. In searching to articulate that which was elusive; that which gnawed at the edges of conscious thought, they were extracting bodily knowledge that was stored in body and mind. Students pounced upon isolated personal nuggets of wisdom and collaboratively worked them into the developing work. In looking through the lens of 'wild thing' they made new meaning by transforming bodily wisdom into a creative
dance that satisfied an emerging awareness of an unknown place called 'Isaiah's Garage'.

Important considerations about my concept of dancemaking are recognizing the unique connection between sensing, feeling and telling, honoring the body as a site of knowledge and wisdom, and understanding how writing can extend the dancemaking experience thereby making important connections between the physical and cognitive domains.

I will reflect upon theoretical considerations of current issues, an historical context based upon socio political events, development of somatic theories and modern dance during the past century and the effect of these influences upon dancemaking in schools. I will consider the interplay of the perceptual, creative and aesthetic areas of artistic growth on this work in order to illuminate possibilities so that 'wild things' in classrooms everywhere, may dance.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated:

- To all the dance students I have ever taught including those ones from long ago for whom I once choreographed an umbrella dance, a cactus dance, a disco dance and a ‘Fame’ routine when the movie was first released! Some of you are now teaching down the road from me in classrooms of your own.

- To my dance education students. I look forward to every minute I get to spend with you. Your enthusiasm and youthful energy inspire me and I believe each one of you will make a meaningful place for dance in your classrooms in the future. You will make a difference.

- To my secondary dance students who secretly wish I was related to Michael Jackson and could hip hop and break dance up one side of the studio and down the other. Thanks for tolerating my notion that dance for you should include some healthy items in your diet and that variety is a good thing.

- To my intermediate students who will dance once in awhile, when no one is looking, if it's not too obvious, behind the closed doors of the music room in memory of wonderful dances together in earlier grades.

- To my primary students who love to dance especially the kindergarten students who dance freely whenever they possibly can.

I have learned everything I know about dancemaking from teaching you. My work is dedicated to you in appreciation of this opportunity.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Celeste Snowber has been my senior supervisor for this thesis and I wish everyone who faced writing a thesis could benefit from the same stimulating conversations, and mindful consideration and support of ideas as I have. Thanks for your open, warm hearted acceptance and belief that I could do this. Your constant reminder to go back and 'caress the details' proved to be the turning point each time the going got rough! Thanks as well to Dr. Stephen Smith whose attention to academic rigour provided much needed support and balance to this hopelessly creative thinker. Thanks to Dr. Meguido Zola for your invitation and welcome reminder to illuminate the poetic truths about dance as well.

Thanks to John White whose hard work and tireless dedication in support of arts education makes Burnaby School District an exceptional place to teach music and dance in. Thanks for your encouragement always to be the best that we can be.

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Penny Simpson is the Thesis Assistant alias ‘Wizard with Magic Powers’ who resides on the seventh floor of the SFU library. Her artistry with a computer is inspirational and I sincerely thank her for making the time to prove to me that I too could be an artist with my PC as well.

Thanks to my beloved family whose support and understanding has sustained my efforts always. Special thanks to Karyn and Adrian who never once complained that mom was too busy reading or writing.

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GLOSSARY

Pilates
Joseph Pilates (1880 – 1967) developed a method of strengthening in the 1920's, which evolved into a vision of an ideal lifestyle. Through visualization, physical strengthening and stretching of the body, mental vigor and improved blood flow returns to inactive brain cells. The Pilates method emphasizes flexibility and coordination, and uses breathing techniques to help increase abdominal strength. It has become popular once again in dance teaching as an effective way to develop core strength.


Awareness Through Movement
Awareness Through Movement is a movement technique developed by Moshe Feldenkrais. These principles use early childhood coordination, breathing patterns and attention to individual movements to re-educate students. Exercises are usually performed while lying on the floor and therefore Feldenkrais work is considered to be a useful tool for healing injuries.

The Alexander Technique
The Alexander Technique was developed by Australian movement analyst Dr. F. Matthias Alexander (1869 – 1955). “The premise of the Alexander Technique was that modern man's brain and nervous system were in disharmony because of what Dewey called the development of conscious intelligence. Alexander's method was to retool the balance between the brain and the nervous system through exercises to correct one's posture and balance.”


Contact Improvisation
Contact improvisation is promoted by an international group of adherents from many walks of life who explore in depth the power of touch. Work in contact improv raises psychological issues such as trusting others and interpersonal boundaries. Properly approached, contact improvisation develops sensitivity towards oneself and others. Consequently, it has great therapeutic value, providing both a physical and emotional outlet.”

Bartenieff Fundamental Movement Patterns

Irmgard Bartenieff refined her ideas about fundamental movement patterns in the 1960's and 1970's. A student of Laban, she is credited for taking the Laban concepts and giving them interconnection kinesthetically. "But until his student Irmgard Bartenieff brought the perspective of her own work from physical therapy to the Laban framework, the Laban work lacked a full body component. Emphasizing the importance of internal body connectivity in making movement come alive within the individual and out in the world was Irmgard's unique contribution to this work. When used therapeutically, Bartenieff Fundamentals is a system of body re-education based on developmental movement, which focuses on finding ease and efficiency in movement patterning.


Brain Dance

Anne Green Gilbert, a dance educator who lives and teaches in Seattle, has developed her own conceptual approach to teaching dance in her book "Creative Dance For All Ages". After learning about and working with the Bartenieff Fundamental Movement patterns she adapted these patterns into what she calls "Brain Dance." Anne teaches teachers and students how to do the "Brain Dance" in schools. To do this teachers guide students through a sequential exploration of the fundamental movement patterns called "Brain Dance." Anne recommends that teachers do this frequently with students as it reintegrates brain function.

Gilbert, A. (2002) Anne's brain dance sequence is outlined in workshop handout material from her teacher training session held in North Vancouver, B.C., Canada in June 2002.

Yoga

Yoga practise, with its emphasis on proper breathing techniques and gentle stretching, the cultivation of body awareness and the acknowledgment of spirituality, can provide a welcome relief from the competitive focus of dance training.


Body-Mind Centering

Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen in Amherst, Massachusetts developed the concept of Body-Mind Centering. This somatic theory explores an integrated approach to movement that includes experiential anatomy, touch and repatterning, developmental principles and yoga. These studies help the student to overcome movement limitations and explore new possibilities for personal and professional development.

INTRODUCTION

Dance has been a conscious part of my life for thirty-eight years. When Gene Kelly sings “Gotta dance, Gotta dance” (Comden & Green 1952), a harmonic chord resonates deep within my body, mind and soul. To me, dance is freedom and flow. It is a welcome and familiar home in my world where I return to play, express, create, heal, explore and live life to the fullest. It has long been my greatest passion. My personal enthusiasm for dance has infused my professional life as a teacher. It has brought me to a place where I know that my greatest contribution towards making a difference in this world somehow happens when I am surrounded by about twenty to thirty students on a dance floor intent upon opening these young minds to new ideas about life through movement.

I have taught dance education in one way or another in a variety of settings over most of the past twenty-five years. These unique experiences have become knowledge that informs my philosophy and practice. Disparate bits and pieces of wisdom about the process of teaching dance in the public school system have popped into my consciousness over the years. These have caused me to lift my head up from the daily furor of classroom activity at times and say, “Aha... I've noticed that before.”

---

1 Comden & Green, 1952. "Gottadance, Gottadance", as sung by Gene Kelly in the MGM movie musical 'Singin' In The Rain.'
I presently teach dance as an integral part of an elementary kindergarten through grade seven music program. Every afternoon, I zip over to a nearby secondary school where I teach dance from grade eight through twelve as an elective fine arts course. In the spring of 2001, I facilitated the creation of a dance experience with a grade two/three class of students whom I taught music to three times a week. Back then I knew instinctively that there was something exciting and dynamic about the way that this project evolved into a joyous celebration of life for my students. At the time I wrote down my observations, filed them away and promptly moved on to other projects. During the course of my graduate studies, as I learned more about the process of teaching and about perceptual awareness, creative process and aesthetic experience, I returned to those notes and recognized their educational value.

During the past three years, it has been professionally rewarding to have had the opportunity to study and eventually organize these observations and details into a theoretical framework. I have included the original copy of my observations about the project entitled “Wild Things Live In Isaiah’s Garage” in the appendix of this thesis. Copied selections from it are inserted in the text where I consider it relevant to the discussion.
By presenting these observations I hope to demonstrate how it is possible to find ways of looking at ordinary things such as garages and wild things so that new possibilities may be danced to life. My vision of dancemaking acknowledges the body as a capable, competent and knowledgeable source of wisdom. The body is an authority of its own lived experience which can be seen through exploration and expression of phenomenon such as memories, dreams, fantasy, knowledge and ideas. The dancing body articulates meaning in physical form.

The education system is one of the remaining institutions where we can acknowledge and affirm the perceptual nature that is our biological inheritance. I believe that our technologically advanced society is at risk of losing connection with the innate physiological nature that is a unique and a fundamental part of
what it means to be human. It is a tool that enriches educational experience when it is considered as an integral part of dancemaking activities.

To me, reading is about making meaning. So is storytelling, writing and dancing. When writing is consciously incorporated into the dancemaking experience I believe that we make meaningful cognitive connections between the physical and intellectual domains. Dance performance is temporal and fleeting. After the movement is over the dance no longer exists in physical form in the same way that a painting or movie does. Writing is a way of documenting ideas in the planning and composition stages of a dance. It is also a way of capturing impressions and details after a performance. Ideas that are written down are saved for reflection at a later time. When used together in education, writing extends the dance experience into the cognitive realm.

I believe that early movement experience has a significant impact upon later dance ability. Educators have opportunities to provide developmentally satisfying and meaningful early creative movement experiences that will lay down important brain connections for physical and cognitive development throughout life. Brain research imaging techniques over the past twenty years have proven that movement facilitates learning. It is therefore clear to me that early dancemaking activities not only facilitates physical development but enhances brain function and cognitive development as well.

Creativity, as I know it, concerns the business of making choices. In visual arts activities, students select whether or not to paint an image of their best
friend as orange or purple. They pick whether to make a big or small shape in a movement composition. Students choose whether to sing loudly or softly in order to blend their voice with others in the school choir. Based upon opportunity and their ability to consider and reflect upon these artistic choices, they incorporate decisions into their repertoire of knowledge. Meaningful creative dancemaking activities allow students to have both enough structure and freedom in order to practice making artistic choices. It is my opinion that practice at making artistic choices and decisions contributes to the development of decision making as a life skill.

There are times during aesthetic experiences when new observations, 'noticings' and data gets processed and integrated by students into an existing framework of knowledge. Sometimes these moments are noticeable, talked about and shared and at other times I think they are private. Dancemaking as an aesthetic experience provides an embodied way to integrate new meaning. Students thus benefit from having a rich and varied collection of meaningful artistic experiences during their educational years.

Albert Einstein mused that "The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of true art and true science" (Einstein, 1930). It is the task of dance educators to uncover mysterious entry points to meaningful journeys for students. Those moments of

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intrigue that capture imaginations are the moments that facilitate fully embodied learning. Dance is a vehicle that is bursting with such entry points to learning.

In the creation of the dance “Wild Things Live in Isaiah’s Garage”, I led my students on an imaginary journey to a place that became alive with meaning for them. The dance that was created as a result of these explorations was just one sampling of meaningful educational dance experience, but there are countless other dance journeys waiting to be realized in every classroom. Some of these journeys are not happening for a number of reasons. Later, an examination of dance education issues will serve to clarify the place and purpose of dance in education so that all ‘wild things’ may dance.

In opening the door of my classroom, I invite teachers to share insights into the inner workings of dance in education. By examining details and observations assimilated from teaching experience I hope other teachers will explore ways of arousing students through dance to engage actively in their worlds. One of the secrets to doing this is to encourage students understanding of themselves in the context of an activity and in relationship to others. Activities that are personally relevant and meaningful empower students to become active lifelong learners.

Opportunities for these experiences occur similarly whether students are making observations about what is happening at the bottom of a chemistry beaker, between the pages of a book or during a creative dance exploration of movement concepts. Dance in education provides opportunities for learning that
are just as significant and meaningful as learning that occurs in academic subjects. Although it is the last arts discipline to appear on the fine arts landscape it is important to consider how dance educates students in a significant way.

In dance education we are educating and preparing students for life through a rich and varied exposure to dance activities. There are a variety of methods and interpretations about teaching dance education available to teachers. As each teacher craftsperson consciously selects the tools that create optimum results for them I will explain the tools that I consciously use in my teaching process. I have best achieved successful results in my teaching by using a conceptual approach to teaching dance and through the conscious development of perceptual, creative and aesthetic skills.

To awaken students perceptually and to provide them with successful opportunities for creative expression of ideas, thoughts and feelings enhances their total aesthetic development. These areas of development are areas of artistic growth that are interwoven with intriguing possibilities to bring students fully alive and to help them discover what their artistic passions are. Once students know what it is that they feel passionate about, then they know what it is that they live for. The arts in education help bring meaning to life.

For those who discover that their passion lies in dance, it brings meaning in an integrated and fully embodied way. The full potential of dance to educate is reflected in the way that dance integrates all the senses in the performance of a
task. Dance, as a medium of arts expression, is uniquely suited to do this because of the active physical integration of body and mind that happens while dancing. Maximum growth for the whole student occurs when learning happens in an integrated way in all the developmental growth areas: emotional, cognitive, physical and social.

Dance education is ripe with potential to challenge some of the cultural strictures that oppress youth. Young people move around in a society that is dominated by pervasive notions about acceptable and unacceptable body shapes. Becoming physically confident and expressive through dance contributes towards the development of positive body awareness. This in turn makes students physically and mentally present to their learning in all subject areas. As educators, we enable youth to achieve greater happiness and success in all areas of their lives through dance, when we wake them up to their own physically expressive power. The development of an autonomous healthy self image through dance is surely a life skill.

Chapter One considers firstly the purpose of teaching dance in education. Secondly, it looks at how dance education is a specialized subject area with its own unique set of concerns. By highlighting key issues I plan to set a contextual backdrop against which to view my observations or “what I know I know” about teaching dance in the public school system. I will demystify some misconceptions that may affect teachers’ ability to integrate dance into educational practice. Knowledge about and understanding of these issues empowers effective
teaching and supports advocacy for the rightful place of dance in education. Although it is a specialized subject area, non specialist teachers who are integrating dance experiences into their classroom subject areas should continue to do so with consideration of the issues presented in this chapter.

Chapter Two looks back at the evolution of dance education in North America from the late Victorian era to the present. Not unlike the hobbit, on his journey through Tolkien's forest, it is wise to pause from time to time and look back at how far we have traveled in order to judge how far we still must go. So that dance may have a vital and dynamic presence in education now and in the future, a look at its evolution and how it has been affected by a variety of cultural, philosophical and sociopolitical events over the course of the last century further enhances a context for this work.

While most of my ideas arise out of my dance teaching experience and study of dance education, I must acknowledge the fact that holistically they are coloured as well by the mottled potluck that comprises my own dance background. My perspective as a parent, my experience as a woman and my personal evolution as a citizen living in this complex culture that is North America also inform my thinking. From this viewpoint, in Chapter Three, I look forward to introducing the reader to some experiential beliefs I ascribe to, which shape my understanding of dance education.

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Chapter Four looks closely at perceptual, creative and aesthetic development. I refer to a "borrowed model"\textsuperscript{4} of understanding artistic growth in visual arts education that is presented by Lowenfeld and Brittain in their book, \textit{Creative and Mental Growth}. I chose this model because it echoes beliefs I have about the way that I teach. I have taught visual art as well as music and dance in the classroom and am continuously seduced and intrigued by the integrative possibilities that exist between the elements of each of these separate yet interconnected arts disciplines. For the purpose of this study I have found that mindful consideration of perceptual, creative and aesthetic development in viewing the dance-based experience of "Wild Things Live in Isaiah's Garage" contributes to an enriched understanding of the dance education model.

Judith B. Alter, a well known dance theoretician and scholar, critically warns that "borrowed concepts are derived from research methods geared to their particular fields."\textsuperscript{5} With respect to this significant observation I hope that rather than merely engaging in an "academic exercise of applied theory"\textsuperscript{6}, that my insights and observations are significant enough to serve teachers who are searching for meaningful ways of integrating dance into their teaching in all areas of the curriculum. Applying this model to my dancemaking experience with children has certainly provided an interesting framework for analyzing and organizing the ideas I have about dance education. It is philosophically

\textsuperscript{4} Alter, J.B. 1991 \textit{Dance-Based Dance Theory: From Borrowed Models to Dance-Based Experience}. New York: Peter Lang. p. 94.

\textsuperscript{5} Alter, J. B. ibid. p. 4.

\textsuperscript{6} Alter, J. B. ibid. p. 102.
grounding at this stage of study and I will hope, serve as a springboard for future work.

Perceptual development, thus related to dance, refers to "the cultivation and growth of the senses" in dance education activities. Creative development is "the ability to explore and investigate problems" and is manifested in dance education by application of the creative process, which I will discuss further. Aesthetic development means "the integration of the senses of an individual in harmonious relationship to concrete forms." In dance education, this means "the organization of body movements to express ideas and feelings" through the medium of dance (Lowenfeld and Brittain, 1948).  

In this chapter I have included a piece of writing that records my perception of aesthetic experience with a kindergarten class entitled "In A Cabin In The Woods" (Beal and Nipp, 1985). While my writing records observations and considerations about a few fleeting seconds in time, I believe it captures something of the essence of aesthetic experience in an educational setting. As an example, it may serve to stimulate teachers thinking about aesthetic educational experience.

Chapter Five is a conclusion. It is my hope that dance educators will take account of my observations as one 'way of thinking" about dance education and consider how these ideas may contribute to their own practice of teaching dance.

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It is important that we reclaim our inherent human perceptual nature in education and mindfully develop ways of working with dance students that cherish, validate and maximize their innate perceptual abilities. Some students appear to be very disembodied not only physically but also emotionally. Popular culture has placed a heavy burden upon them in the strict movement dogma they adhere to. Secondary students personify this disembodiment. In a typical beginner dance class the majority of students are self conscious and insecure about trying anything that is unsanctioned by the music video industry. Many students demonstrate a low functioning physical ability. I believe that there are ways to mindfully re-embbody these young people so that they truly do inhabit their bodies with joy and ease. There are a variety of somatic theories available which can inform the practice of dance education if they are used in a meaningful way by teachers. Integration of some of these theories in my own body work has informed my teaching. Knowing within myself how these theories have meaning helps me seek ways to help my students move efficiently and safely as their needs dictate.

By considering the implication of somatic theories on the evolution of dance education, ideas that brain research has brought to light, established notions about creativity, perceptual and aesthetic development I hope to show that student bodies may be reclaimed as storehouses of wisdom, comfort and joy. Helping students attune themselves to their own bodily sensations and telling, writing and dancing about them accordingly in relation to curriculum produces independent minded, self aware, physically capable and strong,
embodied dancers who will have much to celebrate in their lives when they graduate from school.

Optimally, it would be very exciting for students if all teachers had a clear understanding of creative process so that every dance activity provided some opportunity for student input through composition, creation or improvised "unfeigned movement" (Schneer, 1994). Opportunities for creative problem solving that exist in dance situations provide meaningful transfer of skills not only into other disciplines, but in all areas of students lives. In this chapter I will present some examples of how this can be achieved with dance examples from "Wild Things Live in Isaiah's Garage." By developing a collection of meaningful aesthetic experiences throughout their schooling, students' ability to think creatively is enhanced in all areas of their lives. When this happens freely and naturally in all classrooms, then the potential of dance to educate will be fully realized.

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CHAPTER ONE:
ISSUES AFFECTING DANCE EDUCATION

Dancing in all its forms cannot be excluded from the curriculum of all noble education: dancing with the feet, with ideas, with words, and, need I add that one must also be able to dance with the pen (Nietzsche, 1888)?

May I have this "dance with the pen" for a moment, to consider some of the issues that affect the existence of dance education programs in our schools? No one teaches in a vacuum. We are each affected by a combination of social, cultural, moral, ethical and political pressures that impact our ability to teach effectively. Some of these constraints define problems that can be resolved while others are situations that we must live with, manage and continue teaching despite them. The first step towards effective change is understanding. When teachers understand the intricacies of the myths and misconceptions, issues and inconsistencies that plague their teaching lives then they will be one step closer to creating an optimal teaching and learning environment. If some of the misunderstandings could be cleared away there would be uncluttered space where all participants could give fuller attentiveness to the more subtle, but no less important aspects of dance education, namely, sensory and perceptual development and an appreciation for and validation of lived bodily experience as
knowledge. In outlining the issues that currently clutter this space, I plan to set a context that illustrates the local ‘climate’ that my wild things danced to in Isaiah’s garage.

In his article “Towards More Effective Arts Education” (Gardner, 1988),11 Howard Gardner introduces four major players on the arts education scene and likens them to members of a newly formed string quartet who must learn to listen to one another and blend in performance. These players are “philosophical notions of arts education, psychological accounts of learning in the arts, artistic practices of the past and the ecology of the educational system”. In considering the issues that affect dance education it is useful to note the interaction of these forces upon teaching situations. In the same way that teachers strive to produce students who are actively involved in their own learning, they must also be actively involved in all aspects of teaching. Through effective communication, ongoing education, thoughtful consideration of issues, and participation in organizations within the school setting, it is possible to be informed and thereby to minimize the impact of issues.

Myths and Misconceptions

Unfortunately, there is an underlying myth in public education that “the arts are regarded as nice but not necessary” (Eisner, 2002). So long as there is money to fund programs this myth lies dormant but it surfaces whenever budget cuts in educational program funding become mandated. Subsequently, this kind of thinking means that dance programs are often the first ones to disappear from fine arts programming. While visual arts, drama, music and band programs have been well established core arts subjects in North American schools for the greater part of the last century, dance is often considered the ‘little sister’ of the visual and performing fine arts family in education.

What Does “Dance” In Education Mean?

As dance educators it is not our purpose to train dancers; rather we are educating students about life through dance. Some students may choose to study dance further, outside of the classroom or after graduation, but the real educational value of dance happens when students have the opportunity through movement to integrate their sensing, thinking, social, emotional and physical selves into one coherent unit as a life skill.

There is a significant distinction between dance as it is taught outside of school and dance as it is taught within the school system. Creative dance,

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movement education and dance education all aim to involve the whole student in the healthy development and growth of mind and body. These forms of educational dance are inclusive of all students in a classroom setting regardless of personal restrictions or limitations. Dance as it is taught in dance schools is taught for the express purpose of developing dance technique. The prime consideration is upon the preservation and perpetuation of a particular style of dance. Secondary or scant consideration is given to the developmental needs of the child.

Some forms of dance favor or promote the ‘star’ achievers in a group. They alienate individuals because of body types, personalities, handicaps or disabilities. Ballet is a dance form which has strict limitations about body type. It selects slim body types with specific bone structure and requires dancers who conform to the conventional ideals of ballet. While dancers can be expressive of set choreography, there is usually little opportunity to create original material or to interpret, express or make personal statements about life in the traditional movement text of ballet. Technical demands are very defined and technique training must begin at an early age in order to attain specific standards. This excludes many individuals from the study of it.

Two Models of Dance Education

Dancers in the dance world who wish to ‘teach’ and educators in the school system who wish to teach ‘dance’ often approach the teaching of dance from differing perspectives. Judith Lynne Hanna is a dance educator who has
danced, researched, written about and taught others about dance in the United States for many years. She is a well known advocate for including childrens dance in the curriculum. In her book Partnering Dance and Education she refers to these two perspectives as “the professional model and the educational model” as identified by Jacqueline Smith-Autard in 1994.13

The emphasis in the educational model is on process and the emphasis in the professional model is upon product; development of creativity, imagination, and individuality versus knowledge of dance technique; feelings and subjective experience versus serious professional training; a set of principles versus stylistically defined dance techniques; and student problem solving versus directed teaching (Hanna, 1999).14

Should the ultimate goal in teaching dance be that of training students in a style of dance technique or should it be a goal to develop a student’s expressive movement abilities through a creative conceptual approach? Which model should we adopt in the school system and should we ever combine both models?

The Purpose of Education

In education, teachers have an ethical, moral and professional mandate to consider the development of the whole child above all other interests. Many philosophers agree that this is the primary purpose of education.

The purpose of elementary education in our modern society should be the direction of total development of the child through the

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formative years, which include kindergarten through grade six (Humphrey, 1987).\(^{15}\)

Total development means the emotional, cognitive, social and physical development of the child. Our understanding of this originates in the educational theories of Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Erickson, and Montessori from the early part of the last century. Producing artists, dancers, chemists or athletes is of secondary concern. Teachers have a responsibility to consider what is best for the total growth and development of each individual student we teach.

Harold Taylor is an American spokesperson for arts education. In stating what he thinks is important to remember in education he constructs a model of education that involves students in their own learning.

It is important to remember that education is the means by which students can find their selfhood. It is the way in which students can find out what they believe, the way they can establish standards according to which they will live, the way they can find images of themselves and of their duties. Students must gain a sense of their possibilities and of the range of action they know they can undertake and that they want to undertake. There is, therefore, a double task for students – learning to do something useful for their society and their fellows, and learning to know the range of possible human experience; that is creating in themselves a rich inner life, stocked with ideas and facts that are their own and that elevate them and release them from ignorance and error. (Taylor, 1960)\(^{16}\)

In teaching to the development of the total personality of a student, dance as an arts education experience has important potential to contribute to a rich

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inner life by expanding that range of possible human experience to include a
variety of meaningful dance education experiences.

**Working Together**

In B.C. there is an *Artsmarts* program which is a government funded
program. Dance professionals working in the community apply in collaboration
with dance educators to develop programs whereby they work together to
provide optimal dance experiences for students. Judith Lynn Hanna proposes
some interesting possibilities which may begin a cooperative integration of the
professional and the educational model of dance with the goal of improved
quality of dance and education.

Independent dance schools can include in their brochures and
other advertising materials a description of how their programs
contribute to the nation’s education goals (Hanna, 1996a). These
schools can provide various kinds of programs to fill gaps if no
dance programs exist in K – 12 and higher education. In addition,
independent dance schools can provide teachers and students with
extended opportunities for study and professional training. Independent
schools can request that senior students obtain
release time from the K – 12 schools to take dance classes. Independent dance
teachers can get involved at the local school
district and state levels to help decide how the goals can best be
met (the curricula, standards, and resources). Independent dance
schools can also encourage the K – 12 schools to provide students
with a list of private dance studios for further study. Periodic
continuing education classes for all dance teachers in a local area
with instruction by outside experts can promote excellence in dance
instruction (Hanna, 1999).\(^\text{17}\)

USA: Human Kinetics. p. 84.
Are We Educating or Entertaining When We Teach Dance in the School System?

Another myth concerns views about morality and dance. In the early part of this century in North America, dance in vaudeville circuits, in music halls and theaters created a cultural predisposition that dance should entertain us. Many varied dance styles exist including multicultural dance and dance from popular culture, which provides a powerful decree about how youth shall dance. As well, dance in our society is used for entertainment in show business, nightclubs and strip joints. The music video industry has capitalized upon this. It is easy to see how dance is viewed by some people as morally reprehensible, bawdy entertainment that uses the body as a symbol of sexuality and promiscuity. People with this type of fixed notion of what 'dance' is in our culture may question its place in the education system.

It takes an educated and informed audience to appreciate dance as an art form. Some people do not know what the educational purpose of dance is. Boundaries blur for them and they are prejudiced against having their children 'waste' precious academic time dancing in school. Until they have a clear understanding of the goals of dance education, the myth that perpetuates the belief of dance being immoral affects enrollment in our dance programs, particularly in secondary schools.
Dance as Newcomer on the Fine Arts Scene.

Established beliefs about the value of dance in education have been common knowledge amongst dance education theorists since the early 1900's in the United States. Since that time, dance education programs have been offered in some universities, colleges and schools. Although dance is included in the curriculum, dance education has not been a widely offered program in the school system. As a result, some of the theoretical information about the potential of dance to educate is not widely known beyond the realm of the dance specialist. Dance is included in the physical education curriculum. For many years it has enjoyed the protection of physical health and education budgets before breaking away and becoming a fine arts discipline. Now dance is included in the physical education curriculum as well as having its own dance in fine arts curriculum. In order for all teachers to develop an understanding of the value of dance in education they require access to new ideas and teaching methods in dance education both at the pre and in service levels of teaching.
Issues and Inconsistencies

At the Elementary Level

The daily job of teaching elementary school is a demanding one. Children's needs are immediate and teachers are faced with a range of competing practical tasks that must be accomplished on any given day. They rarely have the luxury of reflecting upon theoretical issues related to their teaching. There once was a time for that during the days of teacher training and occasionally now and then on professional development days, but for the most part, the job of teaching requires a heavy workload with continuous pressures to produce results of a practical nature.

Dance educators who study and write about dance education share a unique advantage over thousands of others who teach dance education on a daily basis, because they are able to stay informed by specializing in their field. Many daily practitioners may not actually consider themselves to be dance educators despite the fact that they do teach dance in education in one form or another. Each area of the curriculum has its own theoretical considerations to be mindful about and it would indeed take a miracle of time management for every teacher to master them all.
Crossing Curricular Boundaries

Dance educators at the elementary level spring from a wide range of teaching disciplines that cover the curriculum areas of physical education, music, art, classroom, English, Social Studies and/or any special need/interest group possible including multicultural, English as a Second Language, handicapped, French immersion, etc. The needs of each of these subject areas are unique. As well, dance education at the elementary level crosses boundaries between the teaching areas of classroom, music, physical education and dance. What is considered essential in one teaching area may lose its significance in another.

Physical education teachers may be primarily concerned with physical skill development and neglect the aesthetic value of dance. A common example of this is the way that folk dance is often taught in physical education classes. Folk dance steps are usually fairly accessible and easily performed which makes folk dance appealing to physical education instructors with little dance training. For this reason, it is perhaps the most 'user friendly' way of including dance in the curriculum. However, without including some opportunity for students to creatively interact with the steps to create their own variations and sequences, there is minimal opportunity for creative or aesthetic growth in this way of presenting folk dance to young people. While these teachers are meeting some physical and social goals they may be neglecting others. The physical education teacher should be concerned about physical development while including some opportunity for creative, perceptual and aesthetic development as well in order to optimize learning outcomes.
A Balanced Understanding of the Developmental Areas of Growth

The full potential of dance to educate is limited when dance is taught with only one developmental area in mind. When it is taught solely as a social activity and other ways that dance can be used, for example as a cognitive embodied problem solving activity, are consistently neglected then dance becomes restricted educationally. There are many opportunities in the curriculum to integrate topics with other subject areas, to discuss, research, write about and compose dance sequences around relevant themes and social issues. Despite the fact that dance education does cross boundaries, ways need to be developed to educate all teachers so that any teacher can facilitate dance in their subject area effectively with a balanced understanding of how it educates in all the developmental areas.

Ongoing Professional Growth and Development

All student teachers should have access to meaningful dance experiences with emphasis on understanding the potential that dance has to integrate all the senses in an embodied way while learning. Teachers working in classrooms are able to fill in the gaps of their understanding about dance education by having access to ongoing opportunities for professional development in dance. Dance is a powerful medium of expression or thoughts, feelings and ideas. It provides a kinesthetic, physical experience for students as well in most classrooms settings as an opportunity for the growth of social skills. By engaging in ongoing study
and debate about its place in education all teachers can strengthen their understanding of its usefulness as a learning tool.

Galeet Westreich is the director of the Washington Center for Learning in Alexandria, Virginia. In recounting curricular choices that he had to make about teacher education courses he states:

Dance educators (should) have a strong grasp of at least one dance technique or style, performance experiences at the professional level, and some practise creating choreography. They should also have some teaching experience and be familiar with the aspects of music, lighting, costumes, and props that relate to the art of dance. Finally, they should know at least one aspect of dance history; understand anatomy, physiognomy, and psychology; and have strong research and communication skills, both oral and written (Westreich, 2003).18

His vision supports the belief that dance educators assume the roles of teacher and choreographer to researcher and advocate and require these skills in varying degrees over the course of their lifetime as an educator. It has been my experience that we assume all of these roles from the very moment we step into that very first teaching situation. We require the use of most of these skills concurrently. Quality in dance educator training is an important goal for teacher training programs.

When dance is used in education as a teaching tool, it is necessary to be cognizant of all of the developmental growth areas and to extend the full range of developmental learning outcomes to include creative, perceptual and aesthetic
opportunities. When educators think this way, then regardless of teaching backgrounds, dance training and experience, goals and objectives, some of the inconsistencies that exist about the way that dance is taught will be eradicated.

**At the Secondary Level**

Burnaby School District in British Columbia, Canada, has a long-standing reputation for supporting a strong visual and performing arts program at both the elementary and secondary levels. Judith Lynne Hanna refers to this situation as an oasis, "where the views of the general public and the educational and political decision makers in this district create a healthy ecology for dance education" (Hanna, 1999).19

Each year for twenty-two years now, there has been a very successful district sponsored dance festival held that runs for three nights. The Burnaby Festival of Dance typically showcases forty-five performing groups each spring. Dance groups perform from across all areas of the school system from kindergarten to grade twelve. Groups which perform include extra curricular groups, secondary dance classes, classroom groups, music and physical education classes. It is a noncompetitive event that provides one of the rare opportunities in existence for local children to actually observe children's dance. The ongoing presence of this festival of dance is a tribute to the support of

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administration at the district and teaching levels that has kept dance visible, alive
and growing in this district despite all odds.

In this school district, it is possible that the existence of a strong
elementary dance presence has contributed to the gradual expansion and
development of dance at the secondary level. In the last decade, dance
programs have been on a gradual increase in Burnaby secondary schools.
Dance is currently offered as an elective course in six of its seven secondary
schools. In comparison with art, music and drama courses, which are long
established disciplines, dance is a recent development on the local scene.

Since 1996, British Columbia has had a dance curriculum in this province
that outlines a sequenced program for kindergarten to grade twelve. Ideally all
teachers, not just specialists, would be familiarized with the goals and skills of
teaching dance. If this were so there would be consistency between elementary
and secondary dance programs. At this time, secondary dance programs need
protecting. As newly established courses this could mean devising and
timetabling creatively in order to avoid crisis reactions to fluctuating enrollment.
This in turn supports the long-term goal of building a strong dance program.

My experience of teaching dance at the secondary level indicates that it is
currently well accepted as a viable arts course. However, comments to me as
the dance teacher, from teaching colleagues, parents and students indicate that
some individuals support its inclusion in the curriculum because of its potential to
be 'expressive' or 'therapeutic', or 'fun'. Each of these reasons suggests a
simplified understanding of the way that dance educates students. Thinking about the purpose of teaching dance as ‘therapy’ or ‘fun’ in a school setting is an unfortunate mindset which limits its potential from an educationally sound perspective.

**Dance Education is Not Dance Therapy**

Dance Therapy is the province of trained dance therapy specialists who often work individually or in very small clinical groupings with ‘clients’. Schools deal with much larger groupings of individuals than do therapy sessions. Teachers do not have the psychological training or certification required to engage in psychological work with people. Teachers have been trained to teach, not to be therapists. Clearly, the classroom setting is not an appropriate place to practice dance therapy. Although dance is an expressive medium and strong emotions can be expressed in dance classes, this is only one part of the process. Feelings that are processed that involve exploration into the sensory and perceptual realms are appropriate so long as they occur in relatively normal group interactions. Emotional expression can be a healthy and natural part of a dance education experience. Situations that go beyond normal group interaction become the province of therapists. It is important to remember that teachers are not trained as therapists and therefore dance therapy should only take place in education when administered as part of a clinical team involving teachers and trained dance therapy specialists.
"The American Dance Therapy Association lists five basic functions for dance therapy: body awareness, catharsis (letting go of suppressed emotions), interpersonal communication, restructuring (postural changes) and communicating with the unconscious (Lihs, 1998)."

Some people misjudge dance education when they suggest that its main benefit is therapeutic. It is desirable to develop increased body awareness, appropriate emotional expression and effective interpersonal communication skills in all of our students as one part of the process. There are times when we may have occasion to consult with counselors and trained personnel to deal with extreme behaviour cases in any one of these areas. In schools where violent acts have been committed students and staff have access to counseling from trained staff. It is a fine line and one of the many instances where teachers must exercise professional judgment about what is acceptable and healthy expression and what is not. Emotional expression is only one part of the developmental growth outcomes of dance education. Dance educators are not dance therapists.

It Is Not Enough For Dance to be just “Fun”.

The process of learning to dance can be enjoyable and teachers may hope that students will experience enjoyment in their learning. ‘Fun’ is not the main reason that dance is taught in an educational setting. John Dewey is an American educational philosopher who was born in 1859. His theories of

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education have had a major influence upon the educational reforms during the past century and today.

As a progressive educator he shared with Vygotsky, Montessori, and Piaget the central ideas of that movement: education should be child centered; education must be both active and interactive; and education must involve the social world of the child and the community (Mooney, 2000).21

Dewey believed that learning activities need to be planned by teachers with consideration to purpose and organization and that children need assistance from teachers in making sense of their worlds. In “Wild Things Live in Isaiah’s Garage”, the creative experience emerged as we explored the learning material I presented to my students. My knowledge about teaching dance to young children informed the way that I guided students through the process. I had a clear understanding of age appropriate and individually appropriate learning outcomes that I wanted students to demonstrate.

Initially, some groundwork prewriting activity was necessary so that the final writing would contain as much movement vocabulary as possible. I gave my students the necessary tools both to create their own dance movements and to contribute to the choreography of the piece as suggested by movement words. We did vocabulary building and out of the cupboard came word cards with non locomotor movement words, such as bend, twist, stretch, turn, crunch, squirm, melt, and punch. My teaching goal was to familiarize students with movement vocabulary by exploring a variety of physical activities using the body to show the meaning of each word.

While exploring the movement cards we talked and analysed what was happening in the body while doing the action words. For example with the word 'bend' we ended up having quite a lengthy investigation of all the hinged joints in the body, which undeniably opened up new movement possibilities for these children. The specific goal in this activity was to develop the necessary body awareness in order to accomplish specific physical movements. I chose one card from the pile and students would demonstrate a movement that fit the selection. Then I gave three cards to each group and asked them to create a movement sequence to physically demonstrate their three words. The class was then asked to guess which words were used in the small group compositions. By the end of this exploration, students became very astute at reading each others body movements and in portraying their own understanding of the words physically.
Rolls of paper were then spread out on the floor and I posed a series of four questions to students. The questions were:

Where do wild things live?
What do they look like?
How do they move?
How do they disappear?

We wrote about one question during each of four sessions. Each session involved initial discussion followed by free flow writing on long rolls of paper. After discussing and sharing, students were asked to go back to their work and circle their favorite phrases. We consolidated our ideas in a collective process whereby I posed questions, clarified responses and scripted student ideas into one main verse at a time.

My educational goals were to expand upon the children’s movement and literary vocabulary in expressing themselves in an embodied way. I appreciated the fact that they were excited about their learning but it was not my first concern.

Rather than saying, the child will enjoy this, teachers need to ask the following questions when they plan activities for children: How does this expand on what these children already know? How will this activity help this child grow? What skills are being developed? How will this activity help these children know more about their world? How does this activity prepare these children to live more fully (Mooney, 2000)?

This is an important distinction to make about the purpose of dance in education. As educators we are primarily concerned with student growth and development. While we hope that students enjoy their learning experience, it is not our primary goal.
Did my students enjoy their dance experience with me? Judging by the enthusiasm they brought with them to class, the concentrated focus and excitement they demonstrated during all parts of the activity from initial activities to the final performance of the piece, it was clear to me that they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Their enjoyment was a signpost that signified their commitment and active involvement in an activity that matched their intellectual, social, physical and emotional learning needs. It is important to make the distinction that 'having fun' was not my educational goal.

Most secondary students tell me that they signed up for a dance course because they want to have 'fun'. While I am pleased that they may possibly enjoy my course I believe that a part of my job as an advocate and teacher of dance education is to educate all participants in the process that dance education activities are a way of developing the total growth of students. Dance in education can be enjoyable but our primary educational goals are that it be educationally meaningful to students and relevant to the curriculum.

**Educating a Community of Learners.**

Dance at the secondary level is new and in many ways 'unknown.' When students complete their course selection forms they do not really know what the dance program will teach them. Some hope to learn new hip hop moves and everyone insists that they want to have 'fun.' Some students are very open-minded and interested in new ideas and others are closed minded and resistant

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to change. Despite the fact that it will take time to get our programs known by the general student body and the public, it is possible to work consciously towards becoming visible and known. Advertising through newsletters and media about performances helps bring in an audience. Creating informal and frequent opportunities to perform helps dance programs become visible to the whole student body as well as to the extended community of learners. Some ways to do this include noon hour performances, studio performances, taking part and performing in other events within the school, year end shows and community events.

At Moscrop Secondary School in Burnaby School District, there is a Fine Arts Council with student members from each arts discipline on the council. One of the mandates of this group is to raise the profile of the arts within the school. Students are working together to have all the arts become visible in the school. With all of these efforts, it is hoped that when students look at their course selection forms that they will have some idea about what dance means. Then they will be informed enough to made a decision about enrolling in the course.

**Advocacy**

An important role of a dance educator is to be a visible advocate for dance in arts education. Active involvement and visibility about promoting, recruiting and looking out for the needs of dance programs is important. By having a clear understanding of the theory behind their practice, teachers can educate the whole community of learners. Critical thinking by teachers about the purpose of
education, the purpose of dance education, teaching methods, and student behaviours informs practice. By expanding an awareness of the multi-faceted way that dance educates in arts education teachers become better equipped to reach participants in our community of learners. Dance issues need to be raised and communicated to students, parents, community members, staff and administration at fine arts council meetings, student meetings, parent advisory councils, staff and departmental meetings. Showcasing dance performances provides the opportunity to see first hand some of the more holistic outcomes of dance. When the public is educated as to the goals and value of dance in the curriculum, then dance will be celebrated, appreciated and pursued as it should be.

Once people actually know what happens in a dance class, what the curriculum requirements are and how students are assessed, then they begin to understand the ways that dance in education contributes to the development of a fully integrated, physically confident, expressive, healthy and free thinking individual. Misconceptions then begin to fade and understanding becomes widespread.

The main way that dance in education will survive and grow in strength as a valuable core arts subject is for those of us who teach it to become strong advocates of its place in education. Connections that we make in the course of a day, in all areas, strengthen our ability to advocate. With the support of colleagues, community, district and school administration, teachers can continue
to grow and be informed and knowledgeable about the issues that threaten the security of dance education as a core arts subject in the curriculum. Taking action to educate and inform everyone about these concerns, protects that most fragile of all the arts subjects, the one that is often 'last to come and first to go' on the landscape of arts programs in secondary schools, namely dance education.

It is obvious that I am a strong advocate for dance in education. I believe that all educators should be advocates for arts education as an important part of a well rounded education. Being an advocate is easy when you believe that everyone benefits from meaningful exposure to interesting dance experiences as part of their education from early childhood to high school graduation.

Looking beyond advocacy for a moment enables us to create a clearing place for dance firstly, to examine and review what is fundamental to the education of every child in society. Secondly, with a clear vision of educational goals in place we may consider new possibilities such as a vision of dancemaking that considers the body as an authority of lived experience capable of reclaiming its inherent perceptual nature in order to develop alert, embodied thinkers who will be well equipped to engage actively with life.
CHAPTER TWO:
LOOKING BACK: THE DEVELOPMENT OF DANCE EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA

History explains to us why we are here now and points the way toward the future (Cheney, 1989).23

Today, history chronicles the perplexing dilemma of why we live gripped by the demands of a fast paced society that controls most of our bodily movement in the execution of a daily job. This way of living exists as a precursor to a future where we could easily forget to dance altogether. Left coping as best we can, we could forget to dance for ourselves and with others at times, if we were unmindful of the necessity to make space for dance in our lives. Alternatively, perhaps dance has never really been at risk as a human activity because it is part of a bodily history that irrepressibly bubbles up, erupts and explodes from within each of us when the need to dance arises.

Historically, dance has been an activity that “is a living language which speaks of man (sic) (Wigman, 1966).24 Should it be left to chance and opportunity then, for dance to occur haphazardly at times in some communities and generations and not in others? Is there significant educational value in purposefully including dance in the school curriculum? These are some of the

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questions that it is our responsibility as educators to be mindful of when we consider the purpose of dance education. A look at the evolution of dance education in North America will help our understanding of its current state. I am specifically interested in teasing out those details which have contributed to an embodied understanding of dance education that validates it as a living language.

Dance has always been a language of the body that visually spatial and kinesthetic learners speak well but it was during the last century that educators were able to translate and inscribe this language into common educational practice. When Ruth St. Denis and Isadora Duncan took off their shoes and danced barefoot in grass that was at times cool and damp and other times fragrant and warm they were instinctively seeking to reclaim perceptual connection with nature as well as more freedom of movement and connection with the earth. I am interested in highlighting some significant turning points in history which have contributed to a similar sensory cultivation of bodily expressivity.

During the past century there have been three main influences upon the evolution of dance education. First there was a significant artistic and intellectual cultural revolution at the beginning of the century which heralded in the development of many new and exciting ideas in several fields. The development of somatic theories over time enhanced the integration of an independent body

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minded dancer who would eventually discover how to dance from the inside out. And lastly, the development of modern dance and dance education bumped against each other and crossed paths in many ways over the past century with its own significant influence upon dance education.

Dance has existed in a variety of educational settings throughout the history of civilization. It has been taught in a variety of ways in schools from the time of Ancient Greece to the present. Others have written about the ways that dance has been taught in school settings in the past. It is not my purpose to provide a complete review of dance education throughout history. The portion of history that is most relevant to my consideration of dance education includes events that took place in the past century.

One of the reasons for this is because the way that we presently think about education has its roots in the thinking of the progressive education reform movement of the early nineteenth century. How teachers think about the purpose of education primarily influences decisions they make about curriculum. At the turn of the century in America, new educational philosophies were emerging at the same time as innovative developments were affecting the dance world. These two bodies of information were evolving in their own rights simultaneously and subsequently melded together to shape the concept of dance education as it is today.

Early modern dancers were seeking to break from the codified structure of European ballet training and so developed their own interpretations of natural
free movement. At the same time, the progressive education reform movement in America had its roots in John Dewey's Pedagogic creed of 1897 where he stated a philosophy of education which advocated for a child centered, active and interactive education involving the social world of the child and the community (Mooney, 2000).25

As well as taking a closer look at the evolution of modern dance I wish to consider the ways that the development of somatic theories of the body has contributed to the development of dance education. Against the unique textural sociopolitical background of the past century I will provide further insight into some of the influences that have shaped dance education as it exists today in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada.

**Cultural Revolution at the Beginning of the 1900's**

The arbutus tree that grows along the rugged coast of British Columbia starts life as a seed that falls to the ground. Those that survive do so tenaciously, surviving semi arid soil conditions, climatic challenges and random encounters with animal life, humans and bulldozers in their quest toward full maturity. Dance education as a movement began in North America in a similar way.

It all began at the turn of the century, and what a wonderfully exciting time it was in so many ways. The spirit of change and

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25 Mooney, ibid. p. 4.
revolution was in the air and contagious among people in many different areas of dance and art (Cheney, 1989).\textsuperscript{26}

The seed of dance education in North America as it is known today began as a new way of thinking about dance and the individual. It fell where it landed in time and culture and was subsequently shaped by a variety of sociopolitical events that would unfold during the course of the century to the present. Social and cultural innovations, philosophical ideas and political events would each affect its growth and development as an important fine arts discipline.

Janice Ross has produced a masterful retelling and analysis of the early development of dance education in North America. With keen insight, her ‘telling’ of the role that Margaret H'Doubler played in the entrance of dance to the twentieth century university, is comprehensive and conclusive.

She considers the dancing female body as a feminist issue of the times and pinpoints both the advantages gained and the conflicts that arose when a discipline that stresses bodily knowledge and that mainly attracts women students became institutionalized in academia (Ross, 2000).\textsuperscript{27}

For this reason, in the following passages about that time period, I have cited her work several times. I do not wish to minimize her writing or take it out of context but believe that this relevant interpretation of history clearly illustrates the early development of dance education in North America.

\textsuperscript{26} Cheney, ibid. p. 1
Barefoot Dancer

Imagine Isadora Duncan in 1925, in a country that was still strongly infused with Victorian moral values, insisting that her dance students take off their shoes and dance barefoot outdoors in nature. To a culture bound by strict notions about privacy and intimacy, dancing naturally and unrestricted by clothing or footwear was culturally a revolutionary act of change and was looked upon critically by many onlookers.

Irene Castle bobbed her hair and shortened her skirt, popularizing a style that relieved women in all roles – housewife or ballerina – and freed legs and torsos to engage in a much wider range of movements (Cheney, 1989).28

Isadora’s barefoot dancing was but one of the ‘new ideas’ of the century. Shoes were discarded, hair was shortened and so were skirts, in order to dance. Women were offered ways to be free both in dress as they danced and in having the opportunity to express ideas and feelings through dance freely. These ways, while considered shocking and morally dangerous at first, were gradually embraced by North American women. The climate that eventually facilitated acceptance of this behaviour was influenced by significant philosophical changes in thinking of the times as well.

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A Changing Social Awareness

At the beginning of the 20th century attitudes about gender roles and behaviour were being widely debated, as is evidenced by a variety of opinions of the times, from religious, political and artistic viewpoints. A new social understanding of womanliness and manliness was emerging in a climate where philosophical consideration of what it should mean to be a child was also evolving.

Manliness

Immigrants from Germany, Denmark and Switzerland brought their gymnastics clubs and their exercise systems with them to America. These activities became very popular and led to the formation of many gymnastics clubs and societies throughout the country. For the first time, a new definition of manliness subsequently evolved in America where physical fitness became a worthwhile and desirable personal goal.

At the end of the 19th century, the benefits of physical fitness were considered to include relief from “the widespread American disorder of nervous exhaustion” or what we refer to nowadays as stress. It provided a desirable outlet for the release of “negative social behaviors” and would become for men a “religious, civic and racial duty” (Ross, 2000). This was a new idea for the common man. Historically, the privileged European gentry had enjoyed the benefits of recreational leisure and fitness activities for personal benefit for many

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29 Ross, J. ibid. p. 54 – 56.
generations. In America, it was the first time that society approved of activity that was not directly geared to working the land or toiling in factories. An established working day provided increased leisure time to allow for exercise. This circumstance, combined with an emerging awareness of the benefits of regular exercise and fitness, brought about this new concept of ‘manliness’.

"Womanliness"

Physical liberation of the body by involvement in physical activity was ceded to men first and then to women. Diocesan Lewis was a physician who practised medicine in the 1840’s. He was a popular temperance and health lecturer who reportedly cured his wife from tuberculosis through the physical regime that he prescribed for her. He developed an education system for young women based upon the premise that physical fitness would facilitate a keen mind. His ideas and work in his school helped support the realization that physical activity for women as opposed to disease and passivity of the times was a worthy goal for education.

The portrait of an inactive, frail, diseased, and morally weak nineteenth-century woman, perpetuated by the visual arts and literature, was ripe to be repudiated by dance (Ross, 2000).\textsuperscript{30}

Dance was somehow purified from immoral implications if it was sanctioned as a physical activity.

\textsuperscript{30} Ross, ibid. p. 34.
In the beginning years of the twentieth century, dance was widely adopted in school, colleges and universities throughout the United States. It was established as a part of teacher training programs for men and women in physical education departments across the country. First then, dance was acceptable for women to study because of its health giving properties. This began through the presentation of dance in physical education programs. Dance in education would later develop in its own right as an expressive arts form but it was in physical education where it first gained widespread acceptance. Annelise Mertz in her chapter “A Teacher Remembers”\(^31\) recalls from personal experience that dance classes were first scheduled in gymnasiums because this was the room with the most space to move in. She goes on to tell how it took many years to establish dance as a performing arts course. She worked from within the Physical Education Department towards this goal. In a way her experience tells on a micro scale how dance in education developed in North America. It was accepted and supported by funding and numbers as a physical education course until it could stand on its own strength and merit in the Arts.

"The Child"

The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778) believed that “children are always in motion; a sedentary life is injurious” (Dewey, 1916).\(^32\) Rousseau thought that movement in education was a necessary and healthy component of a well rounded education for children. His thinking influenced John

Dewey in the early 1900's whose philosophies of experience, nature, democracy and art offered the perfect opportunity for many of the early dancer writers of the same era to challenge the more traditional ideas about education of the times by introducing what they called 'natural' education. The 'child' was being recognized as an individual with unique needs and developmental growth patterns. As Piaget's theories of child development spread, so did the belief that children were no longer 'to be seen and not heard.' The rights of the child were realized for the first time and became part of a changing social order that impacted educational reforms.

The Roots of Dance Education

Around the turn of the century several dance educators emerged amongst the proliferation of dancers who explored new ways of dancing. One of the ways available for dancers to support themselves was by teaching their method of dance to others. Many dancers of the time were successful artists in their own right who developed a following. They did teach children and from this practice developed their own ideas about a new form of dance that they initially called natural dance.


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(1877 – 1927) and her brother, Raymond Duncan (1874 – 1976), both developed and wrote about their own theories of teaching dance. Raymond Duncan lived forty nine years longer than Isadora and although Isadora is indisputably the more notorious dancer of the two, Raymond contributed for many years through his dancing, writing and teaching. Mary Beegle was a teacher of ‘natural dance’ at Columbia Teachers College where she wrote about her ideas of dance in 1916. In 1925, Margaret H'Doubler published her book called Dance and It's Place in Education. Helen Moller in New York in 1916, and Eleanor Elder in England in 1918 both rejected ballet and other traditional forms of dance in their teaching in favor of the creation of new forms of dance which became known as “modern” dance.

The technique systems which our dancer-writers developed share basic organizing characteristics: they are simple and easily learned; they are natural, unlike ballet; they are “harmonious,” that is, they fit the body easily and spiritually; and they are based upon the body’s daily activities of walking, running, and so forth (Alter, 1994).34

Despite the fact that these early dance educators of the first quarter of the century worked independently of each other they shared many common ideals about their philosophy of teaching dance to children, youth and university students. In their writings they believed in opportunities for all students, positive encouragement, and that great music should accompany their dancing. They believed that movement should be natural, and if possible dance should take

place outdoors. They all adhered to a belief that dance is a creative art and the study of it elevates a person's enjoyment of and preservation of life.

That dancing enhances the quality of life reflects the ideas of the rational recreationists who supported the progressive educational movement during the first third of this century in the United States and England (Alter, 1994).\footnote{Alter, J. B. ibid. p. 74.}

Each of these dancers taught dance either in schools of their own, in the public school system, or in universities. As a result of their work, through writing, training student teachers, working with students, and by developing their prescribed exercises that each developed in response to the ballet code, dance in education began to take root in the rocky soil of early American educational reform.

Exchanges between Britain and the United States also influenced the changes in physical education. Many teachers who had studied with Laban immigrated to Canada and the United States, employing his movement concepts in their programs. At the same time, American teaching methodology was evolving, and American teachers who had traveled to Britain offered their insights into effective teaching methods. Thus the marriage began – the use of Laban's concepts for content, with an array of teaching styles (Hall & Murray, 1989).\footnote{Alter, J. B. ibid. p. 74.}

Some significant influences upon dance education as well came from France where Francois Delsarte (1811 – 1871) developed a system for categorizing movement and a series of exercises to develop freedom and relaxation. Following Delsarte, Swiss-born Dalcroze (1865 – 1950) created a
system called 'eurhythmics' using sound and music to develop rhythmic expression through movement. Both of these systems were brought to America where they were taught privately, in universities and colleges. Additionally, from Germany, Rudolf von Laban (1879 – 1958) developed a theory of movement and a system of analysing it. These are only a few of the ideas that influenced the shape of dance education in America but they were important ones.

American educational philosopher John Dewey (1859–1952, American pioneer in university women's dance education Margaret H'Doubler (1889 - 1982) and the educational developmental growth theories of Swiss Jean Piaget (1896 - 1980, and Russian Lev Vygotsky (1896 – 1934) significantly impacted our understanding of dance education. The contributions of each of these individuals were significant in their own right. As well, many of their ideas were being developed and affecting the development of each other at the same time. Margaret H'Doubler was a student of John Dewey at the same time that John Dewey was a patient of Mathias Alexander. Irmgaard Bartenieff was a student of Rudolf von Laban.

These new ideas provided fertile ground for change. Together, they created a philosophical revolution of ideas which had a significant influence upon the development of dance education for the next century. Like the arbutus tree mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, with its life sustaining tap root clinging tenaciously, dance education as we know it today is strongly rooted in the

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explosion of those new and creative ideas that also came to life at the turn of the century.
Somatic Theories Influence Dance Education

Definition of Somatic: "of or pertaining to the body, especially as distinguished from a bodily part, the mind, or the environment; physical (The Houghton Mifflin Canadian Dictionary)."37

Science Based Approach

The development of a variety of somatic theories over the course of the century has informed the evolution of dance training and dance education. At a lecture in Port Townsend in August 2002, Kitty Daniels from the University of Western Washington called this a 'science based approach' to teaching dance in her work with dance teachers and students. Theories about alignment, movement patterns, sensory stimulation, core strengthening, balance, breathing and touch inform our technical, physical, intellectual and psychological understanding about our embodied selves in dance.

Judith Lynne Hanna is credited with first using the term "somatic" in 1976 to describe theories of the body. In the twenty eight years of dance experience that has passed since then, our understanding of the science of dance has gradually expanded to include new ideas.

**Physical Understanding First**

Somatic theories, initially brought about a change in physical understanding of the ways that the body moves. For example, in this century dance teachers have learned much about stretching and flexibility that will keep us 'dancing longer, dancing stronger' (Watkins, 1990). As well as developing technically improved conditioning methods, somatic methods have given many dancers relief from injury and stress. Under the trained eye of a somatics practitioner, dancers and others have been able to change habitual holding patterns that affect not only their ability to dance but their comfort and enjoyment of life as well. When the Feldenkrais method was new there were many people with chronic pain and symptoms who found relief after working with it. Dance training often involves the repetition of moves sometimes over the course of a dancer's entire lifetime. If these moves are performed out of alignment or without the right muscles working together then injuries happen. Dancers are plagued with overuse injuries. Somatic theories have been able to provide retraining and realignment in many cases giving relief from injury and pain. After proof is seen of a new theory as a pain mediator, then people seem to be willing to consider how it might inform the practice of working with bodies in other ways.

Often a newly presented somatic theory is received skeptically and with doubt. Jennifer Mascall is a certified Body Mind Centering practitioner. While

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she was guest teaching one of my secondary dance classes last spring, one of
my students asked her directly, "How do you make your arms move all smoothly
like that?" Jennifer was careful to clarify the question before responding to the
student that if she wanted to move her arms more smoothly she needed more
flow to her movements and the way to do that was to access her spinal cerebral
fluid system. There was a palpable 'stare' of disbelief cast her way from round
the dance floor amongst all students who actually heard this response. This
offering of information to them was so radically new and different from anything
they had ever heard before that they were obviously confused by the terminology
and shocked by such a radically new idea. Obviously, these students would need
to be prepared in some way for new ideas like this in order to make the
information accessible to them. If they had some practice with Body Mind
Centering techniques, perhaps with experiential anatomy exercises, then they
may have received this information less apprehensively.

Integrating Somatics with Teaching

Dancers and teachers have been able to adapt information from somatic
theories to dance training methods. It is important in working with children to
avoid strenuous physical regimes and training programs which may be suitable in
work with adults and were originally designed for adults but would be
inappropriate for children. For example, there are some general considerations
about alignment and activity that we should keep in mind. The following is a
further example of adapting programs that are suitable for children. As outlined
in the glossary, Anne Green Gilbert (1992) from Seattle, Washington has adapted the fundamental movement patterns into a brain dance to reintegrate brain function in children. Many people have adapted yoga positions for work specifically with children. Breathing and relaxation techniques have been used effectively with children as well.

Sylvie Fortin and Madeleine Lord from the Université du Québec à Montréal in collaboration with Warwick Long from the University of Otago in New Zealand collaborated on a research project in 2002 to observe how somatic education informs contemporary dance technique classes. Careful thought and planning went into developing a consistent research approach whereby three teachers who were trained in somatic theory, worked together and documented findings organized around the themes of transfer of learning, movement awareness facilitation and construction of dancing bodies; all with the goal to embrace self-awareness in dance practice. They were mindful from the beginning of the study that the way that they behaved as teachers was important to the success of their goals. They discussed and adapted their teaching methods to the project.39

A Gradual Shift in Understanding Somatics Over Time.

When I began dancing in the 1960's it was a common practice to bounce while holding a stretched position. At the time, that was believed to be the proper
way to increase flexibility. Nowadays, as a result of updated physiological information that is available about muscles, we know that stretches should never be bounced. Once again, in looking back at how far theorizing the body has come, one can pause somatically and wonder how somatics will further evolve to inform dance in the future.

Jill Green, from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro identifies 'somatic authority' as a "focus on and affirmation of what goes on inside the body rather than a sole focus on what the body looks like or how it 'should' behave: and that "somatic educators tend to include students in the process of learning dance by also bringing awareness to inner sensory and proprioceptive processes (Green, 2001)."

Dance teachers who are mindful of the development of somatic theories of the body can adapt these theories to their teaching to produce self aware dancers.

In their book *The Intimate Act of Choreography*, Lynne Anne Blom and L. Tarin Chaplin state specifically that there are four objectives teachers may have in setting an improvisation on a group of people. Consider how a healthy sense of self awareness and body image assisted in its formation by somatic theories contributes to a more meaningful dance experience as you read through them.

Pleasure: the simple satisfaction that results from self-initiated movements; the joy of movement for it's own sake; playful experimentation in an explorative, expressive, nonjudgmental

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setting; interacting and sharing with others; being creative and having that creativity honored and respected.

Physical well being: greater suppleness and better coordination; new movement skills; increased cardiovascular strength, muscular range, coordination, and endurance; increased sensual and kinesthetic sensitivity; the chemical, physiological high of exuberant exercise.

Psychological enrichment: raising, addressing, and solving issues of body-image and self-image; dealing with inner turmoils and problems; working on relationships and other therapy-related issues.

Conceptual growth: increased understanding of dance as an art form including such aspects as abstraction, form, and style; exploration of aesthetic concepts; a deeper understanding of people, their behaviours and motives (Blom and Chaplin, 1988).

It is clear that the greater degree of self actualized behaviour a student possesses correlates to some degree of success and enriched achievement in most areas. These are the dance objectives in improvisation that somatic theories support.

Body Awareness

These objectives include ideas that I believe for lack of experience, opportunity or understanding are commonly overlooked in dance education and which support some of the main objectives of the project “Wild Things Live in Isaiah’s Garage.” While these objectives are obviously interconnected and may

occur at the same time, ideas of particular note to my study combine to form an integrated self image as a result of a collection of movement-related experiences. We have traditionally called this body awareness.

Twenty years ago body awareness meant believing that a dancer would feel physically confident enough to perhaps perform a movement sequence in front of an audience, or that an elementary school student would be able to walk across the front of the classroom confidently. Now the same concept entails more depth of collective experience. The term body awareness presently includes intuitive aspects such as physical kinesthetic awareness, perceptual experience, emotional and social understanding. As an educator I have often noticed that new ideas about bodies, and dance arrive in the classroom last, having slowly filtered down through an extended time lapse between the dance world and classroom experience.

Fiona Banner and Patricia Sanderson from England provide this timely description of how somatic systems aid in the discovery of the self in dance education.

Somatic systems such as the Alexander technique, Body-Mind Centering, and Kinetic awareness offer informed intuitive, internalized approaches to neuromuscular exploration, aiding the discovery of the self that Damasio (1994, p. 200) defines as a 'perpetually re-created neurobiological state'. These systems provide alternative methods of education, for dancers to evolve as versatile and focused individuals, across all the aspects of dance experience. In a discipline that focuses clearly on bodily experience, the close association of the aesthetic with bodily sensation should not be overlooked. A deepening understanding of
physicality should not be ruled out as a distinctive factor in dance education (Bannon & Sanderson, 2000).

Knowing oneself as a dancer, from the inside out as opposed to submitting to externally imposed standards, is one of the most exciting and important revelations that somatics has contributed to dance education in the course of the past century. Learning to dance used to mean that you were a silent observer who did what someone else told you to do. Until theories were explained and before names were given to thoughts and sensations, dance practitioners relied on intuition and instinct to guide teaching practice. My early dance experience consisted of a traditional ballet class once a week and a creative dance class twice a week. In the creative dance class we often began with breathing exercises from yoga. This early work with breath has stayed with me ‘in my bones’ to this day whenever I want to access flow in my movement and has contributed to a sense of knowing myself from the inside out rather than the way I used to hold my breath at times in ballet class.

After working with the fundamental movement patterns at the Bill Evans Intensive Dance Teachers Workshop in Port Townsend in August 2002 I experienced the release of an upper back holding pattern that I have always had. The release came about after practicing head to tail connectivity fundamental movement patterns every day for a week and in discussion and feedback with a partner. Since that time I have definitely enjoyed greater flexibility in my upper

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back. For the first time in my life I have an unrestricted internalized vision of one of the most fundamental of all movement patterns. I have wondered if I didn’t cement this block into place when I began ballet classes because I remember thinking that I had to pull up and hold my upper back. Perhaps an awareness of core support would have been a more appropriate somatic understanding for me to have had at the time. Because I have personally experienced this increased understanding of my own body I believe that somatic theories contribute to knowing oneself from the inside out. Each theory, each new way of thinking about the body contributes to a lifelong quest for body awareness or “knowing in my bones”.

In 1976 Ruth Foster referred to “knowing in my bones,” about movement, as a familiarity with places and bodily sensations based upon intuition and kinesthetic visual spatial awareness (Foster, 1976). Writing as she did in a time before the term ‘somatic theory’ was even coined, this was a thoughtful statement. Twenty eight years later, we have conceptual frameworks in place for understanding and naming this ‘knowing in the bones’ which significantly inform the practice of teaching dance.

Instinct and intuition are an important part of teaching. Teaching is a highly active process involving many complex variables and challenges at any given moment in time. Instinct and intuition become an internal guiding light that one learns to rely upon when one is required to make multiple rapid fire decisions

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in the course of a school day. Over time, as the wisdom of practicing the selective use of instinct and intuition is validated and reinforced repeatedly one learns that it is a reliable and important teaching tool.

There have been many times in my teaching where I have been guided by instinct and intuition in making decisions about teaching dance. As dance education has gradually evolved into an independent field of study over time, I have been able to read about and subsequently ‘name’ and consciously ‘tell’ what is happening in dancemaking experiences, rather than just ‘knowing in my bones’ what is taking place. Bannon and Sanderson cite (Smith-Autard, 1994, p. 32) where she points out the continual problem, that “not only are there never adequate words but there is a tendency not to notice that for which we have no language”. To illustrate this point, I knew instinctively at the beginning of my study that it was important to consider how somatic theories have affected the evolution of dance education but it was not until I had studied this for many months and read several interpretations of this idea that a coherent understanding of my intuitive notion helped me see cognitively how this was so.

The History of Modern Dance in North America

It (modern dance) begins as a choice to move away from the rules, structures, and ideas of the past, those belonging to other ages and cultures of people, and to move towards a more individually creative theory of dance. John Martin, dance historian, has described modern dance as a “point of view” being different for every decade, every country, every human who gives birth to it. The new dancers of the turn of the century chose to release the past, tune in to the present, and totally redefine the idea of what dance is (Cheney, 1989).46

The most famous modern dancers are the early dancers from the turn of the century, for they broke new ground and danced as no one had danced before them. Gradually, the public became accustomed to the idea that modern dancers danced in their own way and that each presented a different “point of view.” For the first time in history this new vision of modern dance illuminated the individual. Each of these early modern dancers is remembered for the individual expression and style that made the dancing unique.

Modern dancers who followed the early modern dancers are the ones who established the place of modern dance in the arts. Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey were concerned with questions of respectability. Ideas they had about costuming and movement demonstrate this. There was a conscious use of strong masculine moves in some dance pieces with the deliberate intent of

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appealing to audiences. Many of their dances evolved around "social, political, and aesthetic issues of the day" (Foulkes, 2002). There was an intellectual aspect to their dances as is evidenced in the esoteric themes and titles that they worked with. "Modern dance achieved respectability in an amazingly short time and even more became the most exciting form of theater ever created out of the American experience" (McDonagh, 1990). They fought to establish modern dance as being art and not the entertainment that it had often been in the dance hall or common music hall theater. These dance artists wanted to prove that modern dance was just as worthy of recognition as the more traditional form of ballet.

Initially modern dancers were soloist performers but gradually they attracted students who danced with them and so the phenomenon of modern dance companies came to be. In these companies dancers were encouraged to keep the individual expression that modern dance exacts while at the same time coming together as dancers so that they perform cohesively as a group. "This tension between individual identity and communal harmony lay at the core of the new modern dance." (Foulkes, 2002). In many ways this tension exists socially in life as well as having some implications for dance education. In the school setting it is desirable to facilitate individual expression for each student while at the same time working with large groups of students to create as much

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49 Foulkes, J.L., ibid., p. 2.
communal harmony as possible. When contrasted with the more traditional style of ballet it is easy to see one reason that modern dance and not ballet influenced the development of dance education.

At the same time what was happening on the dance scene in North America influenced dance education. The development of modern dance grew in tandem with dance education and there are many instances where the two cross over. Ultimately, in the 1940's and 1950's, the meetings and interweavings were frequent and rich. College dance teachers studied in private studios and dance companies performed on college campuses (Cheney, 1989).50

An important connection was the presence of dance in academic settings. This began with Margaret H'Doubler's dance program at the University of Wisconsin in 1926. Gradually students from this dance program graduated and took up teaching posts in schools and universities across North America. The presence of dance in the higher institute of learning helped elevate the acceptance of dance as a credible art form as well as to establish dance as an important part of education.

Postmodern Dance

In the early 1960's modern dance seemingly reinvented itself in America. Students of the earlier modern dancers became the new choreographers and directors of dance companies. Some of them carefully maintained and carried on the traditions they had trained in, while others rebelled, intent as they were upon making their own individual statements about dance. Those who rebelled did not

50 Cheney, G. Ibid. p. 9.
want to mimic someone else’s style. They sought freedom to create their own interpretation of modern dance. Rather than imitating the style of their modern teachers they engaged in much experimentation to discover new expressions that would define postmodern dance.

Choreographers celebrated pedestrian motions, challenged the strictures of choreography with the use of improvisation and chance, questioned the dependency of dance on music and eschewed narrative and theatrical elements of performance (Foulkes, 2002).  

Postmodern dancers created a virtual explosion of ideas about dancing and certainly about ways of creating dances. Dance has never been the same since that time. Each dance that questioned a new idea helped push dance into a new mode of expression.

The ‘Flower Power’ of the 60’s

The sixties was a time of rebellion against the status quo. Kennedy was elected in 1960 and assassinated in 1963. The Beatles performed on the Ed Sullivan show in February 1964. Their music had a huge impact on music, fashion and culture as a time of the ‘youth phenomenon.’ There was an underlying belief amongst young people that you couldn’t trust anyone over thirty years old. The civil rights movements developed in the U.S., the pill was accessible to women, and the Feminist movement was strong. The space race was on to land on the moon. The anti-war movement developed with the Viet

Nam War when many young people were sent off to die in another country. Young people questioned the powers of authority as they never had before. They resisted the draft and developed a new concept of counter culture. Towards the end of the sixties there were several deaths of prominent rock star musicians. Their deaths represented the excess of the sixties. The rebellion by the flower children of the sixties impacted modern dance. Many existing and accepted ideas of the times were questioned and then broken.

Dance was seen as plain, simple, uninflected movement that could be performed with people watching, but not necessarily for their enjoyment or appreciation" (Cheney, 1995).  

Dancers questioned all established notions about technique, form, setting, timing, costuming, music or no music. New explorations were called “happenings” which people were invited to casually hang out at with no price for admission. Events were seen as just a “happening”. Happenings explored a new way of ‘being’ whereby there was no prior planning or choreography. There was great liberation from past structure with this idea.

The Seventies

The election of Carter in 1976 was a time of a ‘kinder, gentler’ American presence in the world. The human rights movement grew. It was a time where the post war baby boomers would wake up, get jobs, pay mortgages and fight inflation, which was bigger than it had ever been before. Long hair on men was

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52 Cheney, G. ibid. p. 10.
well established. The Bee Gees were big in 1974 and with that came Saturday Night Fever and disco. People wore bell bottoms and paisley prints. It was a time of ‘glam rock’ with David Bowie and Elton John showing off. Having already landed on the moon, now there were space shuttles. Towards the end of the 70's a wave of music came up from the streets once more when 'punk' music hit the music scene. It was another rebellion, this time against disco. The Viet Nam war finally ended in 1975. Watergate happened with Richard Nixon in 1974 which brought about a crisis of consciousness. We learned that ‘leaders are liars.’

I was a student at Simon Fraser University in the early seventies. I met Iris Garland for the first time as the instructor of my contemporary dance classes. Initially, dance had a place at Simon Fraser University as a Kinesiology course. I took as many dance courses as possible but in order to get credit for those courses I had to find a general course equivalent in another discipline that would allow me to transfer credit for it. My academic transcript has those dance courses listed as General Studies, Communications, Kinesiology, and History classes. I graduated before dance officially became part of the Fine Arts Department at Simon Fraser University in the seventies. Iris Garland was a major player in making this happen and it is a credit to both her passion for and dedication to dance that the dance program flourishes today as a well respected discipline in it's own right.
Iris Garland was not a ‘dancer’ in the traditional sense at all. She was a tall, lanky, big-boned woman who loved dance. The most important memory I have of her is that she knew how to inspire and motivate students to dance. She was very passionate about her ideas. Her enthusiasm and belief spilled over to inspire students. Thought was an important part of dancing in those classes. Intellectualizing thoughts and ideas and interpreting those into creative movements was how dances were made. Looking back on those days thirty years hence I find it curious to note that some of those early dances, which we thought were so avant garde at the time, are actually very characteristic of the evolution of modern dance that was happening across the country.

I remember a dance that our contemporary dance class created at SFU in 1974, under the direction of Iris Garland. It was an improvisational exploration of “Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Walking”. The title was supposedly a clever play on words about a popular book about sex at the time and the idea for the dance was about exploring over and over again the movement possibilities that exist through one mechanical lens -- that of walking.

Others looked at people walking and performing ordinary tasks. It became interesting for the new choreographers to examine the mechanics of the body engaged in work or play to create dances in a “found” way rather than to determine all of the movements all of the time (McDonagh, 1990).

It was a very different experience for me coming out of traditional jazz and ballet classes as it was my first exposure to contemporary dance. I remember as
we performed this dance in the SFU theater that it was liberating to move beyond the bounds of strict set choreography. There was no music with this piece and it was all about exploration. Another dance that we performed was basically another piece of ‘found’ movement where we walked around the stage in gray leotards and tights and stuffed newspapers inside of our clothing to create some very unusual body shapes. I think it was called ‘The Newspaper Dance.’ Again reflective of the times, this dance was a movement play on yet another ordinary task -- that of reading the newspaper.

Aerobic dancing heralded in the eighties with great popularity amongst the general public. There was an upsurge of interest in dance once more with the direct result of increased enrollment in dance classes of all kinds.

The eighties saw a steady growth in dance education. On elementary and secondary school levels, new standards and guidelines for educational dance as a discipline-based art form were developed by state curriculum experts and dance education associations (Kraus, Hilsendager & Dixon, 1991).54

The National Standards of Dance would come into existence in the United States of America in 1994. In Canada, British Columbia followed Ontario with it's own curriculum in 1996. The existence of a curriculum guide for dance was an important leap forward in terms of sanctioning dance for it's educational merit. It allows for more consistency of experience for students. With a plan in place it saves teachers much time and effort inventing new material, for it is filled with

invaluable resources and suggestions for teaching. It is possible for students to go through a sequential process and the dance experience in schools becomes educationally meaningful.

"Housewerk": A Dance Performance of the New Millenium

On July 9th, 2003, I attended a dance performance of local Canadian choreographer, Jennifer Mascall's new work entitled "Housewerk". It was staged in Vancouver, at Hycroft Manor in Shaughnessy Heights which has been home to the University Women's Club since the sixties. To begin this project, Jennifer first researched the history of the house giving particularly focus to the living that went on there. Then she created a dance arising from ideas that she uncovered about the life and living that went on there over the years.

I have viewed enough modern dance over the past thirty years to realize that boundaries in modern dance seemingly exist in order to push beyond them. I have often thought that modern dance audiences are among the most open minded, accepting, tolerant and informed audiences that exist. As viewers we have a rich historical background of experience in viewing dance. Our knowledge of how to view modern dance began just over a century ago. An informed modern dance audience member today views a performance from a place of collective consciousness that has seen John Cage opening a window and allowing the audience to listen to 7 minutes and 32 seconds of New York street noise. That same audience member was collectively present in the sixties
when Trish Brown took dance outside of the studio and theater and danced up and down the walls of buildings, across rooftops and through meadows. Similarly, when I arrived at the entrance to the McRae mansion to see ‘Housewerk’ last summer, I was open and ready to view dance as it existed at 9:22 p.m. on July 9th, 2003.

I also appreciate how some choreographers draw the audience into an active interaction with the text of their creation by asking them to sit, move, stand, and behave in certain ways. I am familiar with Jennifer’s work and look forward to discovering what the unexpected details will be each time. I know that those unpredictable parts are often the bits that prevent passive outside viewing in contrast, for example, to distancing oneself from life by watching sitcoms on television where even the laughter is canned. These are the parts that invite the viewer to engage and to become fully present to the piece.

Jennifer Mascall has danced all of her life, taught dance, choreographed and earned a living while doing so. For this day and age that is quite an accomplishment. She is a dancer of our times who shares the insights she has about life through her art. Her understanding of dance is built upon the foundations of those who have danced before her but the ‘telling’ of her ideas is her own fresh “point of view”. I think that her craft in observing life, choreographing and thereby ‘telling’ us about life in “Housewerk” is a worthy representation of modern dance at the beginning of a new century.
"HOUSEWERK"
choreographed by Jennifer Mascall
performed by Mascal Dance
at dusk on July 9th, 2003.

ANTICIPATION... As I walked through the main gates towards the entrance of the impressively grand Hycroft Manor at 1489 McRae Avenue in Shaughnessy, images of bygone days and random perceptions about old mansions clamoured against each other in my mind’s eye. I noticed the carriage house off to one side; it’s very existence an anomaly in itself that is in sharp contrast to the one I pass through daily, when I come home at the end of a long work day and enter my townhouse in Burnaby. There is a distinct and almost palpable air of grandeur and privilege lingering about the place. As I was shown through the elegant front door by a ‘butler’ish person I remember that once I attended a wedding here. It was a very elegant affair.

SYNOPSIS... “Housewerk” is a dance performance that is also a retelling about the ‘werk’ of living in this particular ‘house’ over time. Through Jennifer’s choreographic lens, we viewed a richly interwoven pageant of dance mindfully constructed to present comments on love, relationships, class distinctions, power and life that could realistically and undeniably have taken place in the history of this building. If episodes that were danced for us that evening didn’t really happen exactly in the way they were told, then the human passions, desires, and emotions that were exposed and presented to us as lived possibilities were certainly real and common enough to all human experience to provide significant
insight into lived possibilities at Hycroft mansion from the time it was built to the present.

**SETTING THE STAGE FOR DANCE...** Before being summoned to enter the house, we, as audience, stood outside in the gardens enjoying the last few rays of a distant fading sunset. The ‘housewerk’ began promptly at dusk; an intriguing time of day when you think about it. Uniformed maids/dancers served us chocolate mints on silver trays and as I stood there I anticipated that we were about to be invited to partake in a rich engagement with life.

As you can imagine, even prior to the official start of the performance the audience was subtly compelled into interactive involvement in a dynamic changing setting with the audience traveling about the site in order to view the dancing.

Costumes were fashioned from fabrics of bygone days that contributed to a mystique about the living that had gone before us. They were yet another part of the layering of detail about living that brought the history of the house to life... plausibly enough.

**YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED...** Once inside the old mansion, the audience was asked to stand in the front hall of the house. In a way, it was as if the butler had just ushered us in and we had entered the house for the first time as guests. We were silent onlookers, as first the staff of the house made their entrance by scuttling down the grand old front stairs in obvious paid servitude. The rich and lofty employers then strolled carelessly past us as if they didn’t even see us. A living mime took place before our eyes using the gestures and expressive qualities of dance that would set the scene for the rest of the production.

**LET THE DANCE BEGIN...** We were then asked to walk down to the ballroom and take our places as an energetic dance drama unfolded between the servants and two sets of partners on the ballroom dance floor. The movement style was unpredictable and fresh. The dancers were strong and expressive. I couldn’t help thinking that their technique was stronger and healthier than mine was in the seventies by advantage of somatic theories and teaching practice that has allowed dance to become more body friendly than it was back then.

Snippets of humour were dispersed randomly throughout the piece as well as moments of betrayal and pain. At one point I joined a few of the audience members as we waltzed to the accompaniment of a grand piano. We were for a few moments
in time, invited guests to the McRae family’s New Year’s Eve fete perhaps. One wondered if it was usual for the rich and famous to enjoy after dinner dancing across a fine expanse of real, not simulated hardwood floor, on a regular basis, unlike others who work hard and live in one bedroom apartments. The contrast between classes was clearly evident.

After the ball the audience was separated into three groups and decorously shown their way around the house by a uniformed servant to view the work of living that was being danced about in various rooms of the house simultaneously.

DINNER IS DANCED... A dance unfolded in the dining room complete with candles and food while the maids sneaked stealthy sips of liquor between courses. They read stolen love notes before they served a master and mistress of the house who were caught up in their own drama of relationship tension. The maids at one point dove beneath the main dining table and hid, silently witnessing everything that transpired while their employers lived in front of them, as it really would have been; their soap opera of the times entertainment.

LIFE AND DANCE GOES ON AROUND US... While sitting in the dining room, dancing took place in other rooms of the house for other audiences. One was subtly aware of the sound of living coming from other parts of the house in a very realistic way as doors opened and shut for dancers who moved in and out of rooms before our eyes. The house was alive. One could only imagine what was happening in those other rooms. All this was hinted at by sounds of living and fleeting movements that were heard and glimpsed from time to time.

After dinner was danced in the dining room, we were escorted into a main hallway and seated on the stairs. We saw a parade of ‘lives’ stroll through the front door, busy people dashed from living room to back hall, ghostly spirits lingered and lamented, lusted and left, vividly casting impassioned dance vignettes of another time our way.

My group’s visit to the McRae house ended in the front living room with more movement and storytelling unfolding, as the maids cleaned and the gentlemen fretted and the grand piano was played upon, plaintively and evocatively, by a real person.

THE CONSCIOUS CRAFT OF CHOREOGRAPHY... As an artist, Jennifer used dance as research to retell lived experience. In her creation she consciously crafted several important elemental features into this dance. She used natural lighting when she chose dusk as the time of day for the dance to begin and artificial lighting to enhance and simulate
moonlight. With costuming, she used colour, texture contrast, style and detail with accessories that brought life to the dance. Moving the audiences interactively throughout the house to sit in the dining room on hard chairs and in the living room on settees and sofas, to sit on the grand stairwell and look down, or to stand in the foyer and look up at the dancers, or even to dance with the dancers on the ballroom floor drew them in kinesthetically. Perceptual detail was consciously used to enhance the dancing with real food and wine, sweating bodies, sounds from other rooms, chocolate mints, sounds and music, coexisting in the dance space with the dancers as well as not being as distinctly separated into audience/viewer as exists in a theater setting.

With a lifetime of experience dancing and choreographing dances in this and the past century I believe that Jennifer’s dance “Housewerk” is a particularly meaningful sampling of dance as it has evolved to the present time. Jennifer’s experience and obvious craft of choreography produced a dance that is representative of dance here and now.

**AFTERTHOUGHTS...** I told Jennifer after the performance was over and the ‘guests’ were leaving that I had enjoyed the performance; trite words for such depth of emotion, for having been swept out of 2003 and in and out of other decades and lives. I hope she understood that what I really meant was that for a time I had lived another life as I viewed her presentation of it. I appreciated the engagement I felt as I moved from room to room in this grand old mansion. There was nothing passive about my appreciation of her ‘housework’. For a time her artistry had brought Hycroft Manor to life through dance.
Dance That I View and Participate in Affects My Teaching

Modern dancers of our time embody the history of dance in the presentation of their ideas. Those who have danced before have shaped the dance that is viewed today. Jennifer is a certified Body Mind Centering practitioner. Cornelius Fischer Credo has a strong Limon influence in his technique. What these two people believe and the way that they dance influences what they have to say and the way that they ‘tell’ it to us. Jennifer’s presentation of ‘Housework’ stimulated my ongoing development as a teacher for I saw ways that I could use movement as research in my dance classroom with my students.

This particular performance was rich in perceptual attention to detail which I find stimulating and engaging. Firstly, I was aware of it as a viewer observing the dance, and secondly, when I analysed the conscious use of craft in the work, it validates my awareness of perceptual detail in my own work with students. For me, “Housewerk” was different from other dances I have seen because of the active engagement and participation of the audience as more than a passive vessel. Viewing this Mascall dance invited the audience to share the experience of the dance for a time.

As a dance educator I am influenced by the dance that I view and study. I collect ideas from watching performances that I adapt to my classroom teaching. Jennifer Mascall spent the month of April, 2003 working with my students in a
collaborative project sponsored by Artsmarts with contribution from school and district level as well. She workshopped ideas from her ‘Emily Carr’ project with my students. It was an educational opportunity for my students to work with a choreographer and teacher from the dance world as well as a valuable opportunity for both of us to learn more about teaching dance to secondary students.

Interactions with other members of the dance community inform my teaching as well. Dianne Carr and Kathryn Ricketts collaborated together in a similar Artsmarts grant at Burnaby South Secondary School. With one of Dianne’s secondary dance classes, they workshopped ideas around the issue of ‘bullying’. This work culminated in a performance presentation to targeted grade five elementary students in the district. Kathryn brought some of her young adult dancers into the project to work with the secondary students. Being able to provide models to secondary students of working/studying pre professional dance students seemed to be an effective way to motivate secondary students. I took my grade five music students to view this performance and was interested to learn some of the ways that Kathryn and Dianne worked together to produce the piece.

I have attended a variety of professional development workshops and conferences with opportunities to learn from the dance community both locally and in the United States. Last summer I attended the Bill Evans intensive workshop for dance teachers in Port Townsend, Washington and in January
2004 attended the National Dance Association's pedagogy conference "A Moving Landscape" in Dallas, Texas. Because dance education is a relatively young and small discipline locally, it was inspiring for me to participate in opportunities outside of this community and to learn from other well established programs.

Opportunities to learn about teaching methods of local Vancouver dancers such as Judith Marcuse, Judith Garay, Cornelius Fischer Credo, Kathryn Ricketts and Jennifer Mascall, have provided me with invaluable opportunities for teacher development. As a dance educator I believe it is important to be informed about 'dance' and 'education' for the two are interconnected in important ways. It is clear to me that my teaching is significantly better from meaningful interactions with the dance community at varying levels of involvement.

My involvement with the Vancouver Tap Dance Society as a dancer and board member have given me the opportunity to address educational issues in a community dance school that is run as a society. Participating in classes and workshops at Harbour Dance in Vancouver over the years has given me not only the opportunity to attend a wide variety of workshops with direct practical application to teaching but it has also given me the chance to step out of my teacher role and for an hour or so experience what it feels like to be a dancer and a learner once again.

Returning to my favorite jazz class at Harbour Dance brings a sense of rootedness, almost homecoming in a sense for I have taken classes from Pam Quick Rosa off and on now for twenty eight years or so. Most of the class time
now is spent sweating and labouring away to reclaim those few moments of 
connection and flow where physical exertion matches inner expressivity. When 
those few precious moments do occur it seems that I am affirmed yet again that 
dance is a place of joy in my life. I return to the classroom somehow personally 
renewed and secure in the knowledge that similar moments of optimal flow are 
waiting ‘in the wings’ for my students to discover in their own ways.

Taking dance class also turns my teacher self into my learner self. As I 
struggle to make meaning from cues not heard, missing directions, reversing left 
and right, remembering patterns and sequences, keeping rhythms and tempos I 
become viscerally empathetic to what my students must also struggle with in 
their attempts to make meaning in my class. Maintaining connection with my 
dancer and learner self provides living clues that inform my teaching methods.

As a member of the Dance Center I receive announcements that keep me 
informed about upcoming performances. I like to attend a mixed variety of live 
dance performances on a regular basis. The British Columbia Teachers 
Federation Dance Specialists Association organizes a conference in October 
each year where dancers are brought in to work with teachers. Over the years 
this access has provided me with the opportunity to meet and learn from dancers 
I would otherwise never have met. Having access to a variety of living ideas 
from the dance world feeds and informs my teaching practice. While it is our 
professional mandate to consider the developmental needs of our students first, 
as educators we are educating them about life through dance. This can greatly
be assisted by continuing to build and maintain educationally rich and meaningful connections between the dance world and schools to the mutual advantage of both communities. Historically, there has been a marked abyss between the two communities. Based upon my experience as a teacher with Burnaby School District, I know that we are mindful of the importance of maintaining this important connection and appreciative of the diverse and talented dance community that teachers have access to in the lower mainland of British Columbia.
Conclusions

The evolution of dance education from its early beginnings more than a full century ago until the present has been affected by many influences.

Through advanced research in the last century, science has given us a much fuller understanding of the complete relationship of body and mind. This knowledge, combined with lessening religious intolerance and a changed social attitude (mainly after World War I), resulted in the development of a different form of dance — modern dance” (Mertz, 2002).

Modern dance has been the most common style of dance to be studied in dance education courses, particularly at the university and college levels. However, there are features of modern dance that fit into elementary and secondary school settings as well. Annelise Mertz taught modern dance for thirty-one years before becoming a professor emerita at Washington University in St. Louis. In reflecting upon her teaching career she explains that modern dance was the form she chose to teach, “because I believe that, in its analytical and creative approach to movement, it can stimulate the imagination and the intellect. It strives for the development of the body in an integrated way and serves as a valuable source of self-awareness (Mertz, 2002).” The reason that it matches the goals and purposes of education so well is because there is much about modern dance to analyse and be creative about. There is also a place for individuality in modern dance. Modern dance is more forgiving of normal people.

and their individual differences and limitations. Concerned as we are with the total development of the child, here then is a form of dance, which parallels creative dance, creative movement and movement education ideals and is directly suitable for cognitive development along with emotional, physical and social development.

The early work of Piaget and Laban and others still informs our understanding of child development and movement analysis. Laban’s work is of fundamental significance to any understanding of movement. His work has possibly had the greatest single influence upon the theory of movement that we teach in dance education. The evolution of modern dance provides us with a rich source of creative interpretations and innovations to draw teaching material from. The philosophical, cultural and sociopolitical events of the past century have given us new ways of thinking about the rights of the individual in society.

In the introduction to her book Body Moves, Julia Foulkes cites Martha Graham as saying “You do not realize how the headlines that make daily history affect the muscles of the human body.”  

I was teaching a dance education course to undergraduate students at Simon Fraser University during the September 11th crisis in 2001. Their movement journals reflected the turmoil that they experienced around this event and their movement pieces reflected conscious choices they made to express feelings of bewilderment, anger and oppression. It was clear to me that dance provided them with a thankful release.

57 Mertz, A. ibid. p. 35.
58 Foulkes, J. 19
of tension and an opportunity to express their feelings about the unfortunate headlines of the daily history of September 11, 2001 that had imbued itself upon the muscles of their bodies.

Our current knowledge of 'science based' somatic theories will continue to evolve in pursuit of safe and healthy ways of working with dance students. Teachers continue to learn more about the potential of dance to educate. At the same time as teaching methods are developed in the school system dance education is changed and affected by what happens in the dance world. Both of these are informed by an awareness that dance in education exists like everything else, in a diverse and complex sociopolitical environment that we live and breathe within.

The rise and fall and rise of modern dance, the educational and developmental theories of Dewey and Piaget, Laban's developmental analysis as well as the discovery of a variety of somatic theories have impacted the evolution of dance education over the past century. Dancemaking has come into it's own right as an opportunity for students to learn about life by engaging in activities where teachers have an understanding of kinesthetic, visual spatial intelligences. Somatic theories inform the practice of dancemaking. The experience is enriched by consciously integrating the senses into the experience. It is within this context that I wish to explore some experiential beliefs I have that also affect my understanding of dance in education.
CHAPTER THREE: SENSING, FEELING AND TELLING

At this point in my study I would like to articulate the connection between sensation and perception. Our first bodily link with the outside world is one of sensation. The sensations that we see, hear, feel, taste and touch inform our perceptions. We perceive after we sense. This is an important link in elemental survival as well as the way that we live in the world. In education we honor this important relation when we consciously integrate the sensory perceptual into activities.

Sensory Alienation and the Relationship of the Body as Learner with Nature

We ought to dance with rapture that we might be alive (Lawrence, 1932).  

In primitive times before the arrival of an industrial and technologically advanced civilization, humans lived in immediate sensory contact with nature. There were no softening interfaces between human bodies and primitive nature. The body knew the sensation of pain if a bare foot stepped upon a sharp rock. There was little to be done about the climate and if the weather was cold then so was the body, with no option of retreating indoors to turn up the heat.

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As civilization evolved, many interfaces have been developed between the elements and human bodies in the way of shoes, clothing, automobiles, elevators, televisions and computers. Much of the elemental connection that humans once had with nature has dissipated. Now, in the rush to accomplish much in a day, human bodies even take for granted the air that they hastily breathe and the bottled water that they often forget to drink enough of.

In the history of evolution, people were first breathing sensing creatures whose immediate thinking reactions primarily to their sense of smell determined whether or not they would live to see another day. Early humans relied intimately and intensely upon their senses for immediate survival.

The most ancient root of our emotional life is in the sense of smell, or, more precisely, in the olfactory lobe, the cells that take in and analyze smell. Every living entity, be it nutritious, poisonous, sexual partner, predator or prey, has a distinctive molecular signature that can be carried in the wind. In those primitive times smell commended itself as a paramount sense for survival (Goleman, 1995).

Immediate reaction and action based upon acute sensory perception kept people alive. Relationship with each other and with the environment were immediate as a result of active sensory engagement with both. Now, daily experience moves people at a rapid pace that keeps them preoccupied, barely tuned in to their senses and yet they wonder about “the consequent flattening of our human relationships” (Abram, 1996). Abram goes on to say,

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We must renew our acquaintance with the sensuous world in which our techniques and technologies are all rooted. Without the oxygenating breath of the forests, without the clutch of gravity and the tumbled magic of river rapids, we have no distance from our technologies, no way of assessing their limitations, no way to keep ourselves from turning into them (Abram, 1996).61

Unlike Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, when human bodies sit in automobiles in traffic lineups there is small likelihood of attack “by lions and tigers and bears.” Is there a balance point somewhere between the two extremes of raw survival and complacent technological stasis, so that human life is able to maintain a mindfully caring and harmonized interaction with nature? As a culture, it seems that humans have become dimly aware that there is a sensory world surrounding them that is rich in textural experience.

These living bodies of ours with so much sensory potential “are being skinned alive” inscribed by the productive processes that exploit human lives for economic purposes (McLaren 1999: x in foreword to Shapiro, 1999).62

An unfortunate result of becoming ‘skinned alive’ is that people have withdrawn from active engagement in learning and life as they move through the automated motions of each day.

Many North Americans have become resistless about participating in their culture as is evidenced by those who sit nightly in an advanced state of inertia before a television set. By watching a sporting event or a music or dance

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performance rather than making the effort to get up and actively engage in these activities “they are becoming passive viewers of their culture rather than active makers of it” (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1947). Active participation in the arts may be a way to “heal our bodily rupture with nature” so we “do not lose the anima mundi of our body (Frahleigh, 1987).” Remaining sensorily alive in arts activities is a way of staying connected to nature in an embodied way.

Education of the body is a perfect ‘tool’ to combat a static digestion of life. When students engage in dance activities, their senses are stimulated and the learning that takes place as a result of active integration of the senses becomes particularly meaningful. It is one of the reasons that past students will comment upon this or that dance performance, musical presentation or Christmas pageant as being one of their favorite memories of school life. It was likely one of the few opportunities in their school lives where they gave themselves over to becoming wholly present and wide awake to a meaningful learning experience with maximum integration of the senses.

As dance educators I believe we indisputably have the best ‘tool’ to stir our learners to be wide awake to life because we work with the body. This provides the potential for total body integration of learning with the physical and kinesthetic activity that takes place in dance activities.

In dance, thought is primed at the point of action. This is not the reflection of the contemplative mind but rather intellect poised in the body, not the deliberate consideration of alternative courses but thought in process, intimately responding to and guiding the actively engaged body (Berleant, 1991).

All learning occurs in the body. Sensory input received in the brain enables humans to react, think and make meaning of their worlds. When educators access this important function by reconnecting students with their instinctual perceptual birthright then students will have ways to fight the atrophy of the senses and the sensory alienation from nature that is common experience now. By devising ways for students to reconnect with their senses in dance activities they will be able to awaken and reclaim their instinctual human sensory nature.

The following is an example where I consciously structured the pre writing activity for this dance piece by asking students to think about and record what the smells and textures were that awaited their discovery in the creation of “Wild Things Live in Isaiah’s Garage.” In planning this activity my desire was to engage students perceptually. This criterion informed my decision to design curriculum that would meet these goals.

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Wild Things Live In Isaiah's Garage...

I asked them, "What did it smell like inside Isaiah's Garage?" We shared a desire to create and by attending to the senses we uncovered bits and pieces of words that strung together to capture elusive thoughts, ideas and feelings. When asked what Isaiah's garage smelled like students spoke almost at once. "It's dark," said one student. "It's dusty," spoke another, "there's oil on the ground." Tarina wrinkled up her nose and said, "It smells like skunks." There was a pause as they looked around at each other as if sharing some mutual secret childhood understanding about all those dark scary places out there. Collectively and intuitively they knew that in such an instance one would not feel so brave. Each brain sought to capture the essence of that feeling. "So you tiptoe," said one boy. "Carefully", said another. "Cautiously," said the last. The sense of smell memory was but one example of extracting information stored first in the body. As we built the writing together we fed off the creation and worked through the process until our collective questions had been answered.

Embodied Learning

Much of our relating in the world is experienced through our body, yet seldom do we take this as a serious place of study (Snowber, 2002). 66

The body is the site where learning takes place. Dualistic thinking from the Cartesian model of mind where mind is superior to the body has tainted
traditional educational theory with the pervasive stigma that the mind is pure and right and that the body is sinful and wrong. Although many of us more or less understand this dichotomy when engaged in a discussion about it there is a dangerous but habitual tendency to overlook the significance of it for it is deeply ingrained in the belief system of our culture. Unless we consciously advocate for embodied learning as a right of every child we risk doing a disservice to the way that we were created whole.

Humans learn with their entire being. Brain research has allowed scientists to study the brain and it is well documented how “most of the brain is activated during physical activity (Jensen, 2001).” Involving the body in physical activity during a learning activity enhances the total learning experience. “I believe in action and activity. The brain learns best and retains most when the organism is actively involved in exploring physical sites and materials and asking questions to which it actually craves answers. Merely passive experiences tend to attenuate and have little lasting impact (Gardner, 1999).” This is obvious to me by the way that I learned to count. I remember sitting in a chair in grade one while learning to count. We were expected to be learning the numbers by saying them out loud with our hands obediently clasped together on top of the desk, however, even at six years old, my body knew that in order to ‘learn’ my numbers, physical movement would help me. So the ‘way’ that I learned to count was with my hands cautiously controlled so as not to move noticeably while I

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gently pressed each finger separately against the other hand as I counted. This physical embodiment of my personal learning style provided me with the kinesthetic reinforcement that I needed in order to learn with mind and body integrated and whole. To this day when I need to concentrate while counting I can still readily revert to this bodily stored kinesthetic learning strategy.

At times, students trying to describe something would make a gesture or movement in an attempt to draw forth and communicate meaning, but the word would evade them. Another student would jump in and say the word or phrase that satisfied the knowing for us all. Students were often using movement before words. They were developing spoken vocabulary and movement vocabulary simultaneously. They were reading body gestures and naming them as well as interpreting words and ideas through movement. Much interpersonal communication happened through listening, talking, reflecting and watching. Communicating with movement and connecting in a bodily sense through movement exploration gradually led students to a developing awareness and understanding about how to use the body as an expressive tool. They brought this new awareness with them when it was time to make the dance together.

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Exemplar 2 Poem: "Our Bodies Contain a Virtual Storehouse of Lived Experience."

There is a scar...
right here on the ball of my foot
acquired from running through sand at Tobermory
at the age of seven and landing heavily
upon the crescent shaped remains
of an old glass Coke bottle.

Why is that girl favoring one side?
Perhaps she has a strained or weaker set
of muscles and ligaments that she favors
as the result of an unfortunate accident.

Did you see her birthmark? It is large and purplish red...
obviously prominent and shied away from by strangers.
Is there a preference to perform a task in a learned manner? How do you tie your shoes? Are you right-handed? 

...or left-handed!

LOOK!

over there... slouched into the leather couch in the dentist's office!

NOTICE... if you will...

the posture of that elderly lady

as she carefully picks through the nectarines in Safeway.

...perhaps the overweight girl in the corner

...protectively warding off uncertainty about body image!
...the Asian boy who just moved here from Hong Kong...
yet does not speak English
...has a preference for a distinct quality of movement...
You see... he favors movement from the joints -- hip hop

...whereas Jasmine from Brazil with her flashing dark brown eyes
chatters away nonstop and never stops moving.
She favors movement using her muscles --
lengthening them out and stretching to jazzy music --
swaying -- swinging!

Every bodily detail is a bit of knowledge about who we are.
Telling What You Know

The call to write is a call received in the body first. Creativity is not tidy or polite – it’s insistent. It calls us to feel, not dimly, not safely, but wildly, passionately in every cell and fiber (Lee, 1994).^{69}

“When you tell, as most teachers know by now, you are making connections, creating patterns, making sense of what seems devoid of meaning (Greene, 1995).^{70} There are many ways to tell. You can speak, alone or in conversation with others. You can mime or gesture. You can tap out rhythms in tap shoes or in gesture through Polynesian dancing. You can dance and sing meaning into being or you can write it out or you can combine several.

You may speak about something one day, dream about it and muse over it silently for awhile as you make up a song about it. You can dance it. You can forget all about the meaning you have made of it. Years later you may even be reminded of it during a conversation, by a gesture seen across a room or while standing in a shady spot where the sun is just so that you are drawn back into a recollection of what once was vivid and real. You never forget that which has personal meaning to you and in the telling and retelling of the same event, our stories are born.

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Writing is a powerful way of making meaning of our lives and of articulating sense about the world around us. "Learning to write is a matter of learning to shatter the silences, of making meaning, of learning to learn." (Greene, 1995)\(^71\) Learning to dance is also a powerful way to shatter silences, of making meaning, of learning to learn.

The process of writing can be compared to the process of creating dances. Wendy Oliver, Ed. D.\(^72\) from Providence College, Rhode Island described the parallel that exists between the two during her presentation at the National Dance Association's Pedagogy Conference in Dallas, Texas in January 2004 as follows. She referred to Jerome Bruner's (1971) theory that humans represent and organize their experience of the world in three ways: enactive, iconic, and symbolic. Enactive means to learn by doing a task physically and actively. Iconic learning is understanding that is derived from watching images or pictures or words. Symbolic learning is comprehension of words as in talking or writing. These three ways of learning can be simplified to state that they use the body, the eye and the brain. Both writing and dance use this multi-representational mode for learning. The process becomes a continual loop among the eye, hand and brain (Emig, 1977).\(^73\) In dance composition students create a shape or symbol involving the eye, which is performed by the body and interpreted by the brain.

Writing theorist Janet Emig states that higher cognitive functions such as analysis and synthesis “develop most fully only with the support system of verbal language –particularly, it seems, of written language (Emig, 2001).\textsuperscript{74}

In order to develop these higher level cognitive functions in dance it makes sense to include writing activities as part of the educational dancemaking experience.

In my search to create opportunities for student “articulation and sense making” I find it effective to integrate dance and writing together. They are a dynamic duo which I have used in various combinations to create inviting and engaging ways for students to work. The combination of the two means of expression is a powerful way of extracting information about those “hidden silences” (Olsen, 1978)\textsuperscript{75} and unknown subjects; about “the unborn, the unseen, the unheard”. (Nachmanovitch, 1990)\textsuperscript{76} These spaces lurk at the edge of conscious experience in the “hidden corners” (Nachmanovitch, 1990)\textsuperscript{77} of our worlds.

\textsuperscript{74} Emig, J. \textit{Embodied Learning}. English Education. 33 (4), p. 271-80.
\textsuperscript{77} Nachmanovitch, S. (1990) Ibid. p. 117.
The connection between dredging up feelings, sensing and knowing through lived bodily experience and writing it down is a strong one. The writing and the movement that students produced was extracted from within. Students were invited physically to dwell in the imaginative realm, initially with their exploration of movement vocabulary and their writing and subsequently with their dancing. In searching to articulate that which was elusive they were writing down knowledge they had that was stored in body and mind. In looking through the lens of 'wild thing' they made new meaning by transforming known bodily information into a creative description that satisfied an emerging awareness of an unknown place called 'Isaiah's Garage'.

To extract bodily knowledge in writing we agreed to slow down enough within the classroom setting to attend to those noticings that we might otherwise have overlooked. We found ourselves listening to small details that were gnawing at the edges of conscious thought. We pounced upon these isolated individual nuggets and collaboratively worked them into our developing work.

The process of writing and narrating our script onto an audio cassette tape took six weeks and the actual dance making took two weeks to complete. When the writing was finished I was aware of how 'primed' the students were to create their dance. They were virtually bursting with movement ideas. These children had been keenly interested in the creation of the written work and so they continued to be when it came time to create the dance piece. They
demonstrated enthusiastic involvement and commitment to this piece of work both in their writing and in their dance making activity.

The integration of the physical and cognitive realm of body and mind creating as one promotes dynamic embodied learning. Narrative embodied writing entices students to explore new territory (Snowber, 2002).\(^78\) When we tell, whether we do so through narrative embodied writing, poetry, response, journaling, dance or any combination or integration of these tools for learning, we are “stepping into the unknown” (Nachmanovitch, 1990)\(^79\) and discovering how to become “wholly wide awake to the world” (Greene, 1995).\(^80\)

The following selection illuminates the initial discovery which did kickstart the writing process and uncovered the entry point of intrigue that was to become the seed of inspiration for the dance that we would create. Entry points to other adventures were suggested by other students such as “wild things live in Nelson’s hair” and “wild things live in a big oak tree”. As their teacher, I knew I wanted to facilitate a wise choice that would provide the best educational experience for them. Based upon my knowledge of these students and upon my instinctive reading of their reaction to this particular invitation to explore something together, I knew that this was a good entry point for our joint writing and dance making adventure to begin. I had been searching for it, hoping I would be able to unearth it. “Wild Things Live in Isaiah’s Garage” was the seed

"phrase" we needed to embark upon our collective journey to "uncover places of discovery, surprise, mystery, and wonder (Snowber, 2002)." At the end of day one I noticed a tiny scribbled phrase in the corner of one of the rolls stating that "wild things live in Isaiah’s garage".

As I talked about the phrase with the children I realized that it contained a feeling of mystery and provoked a sense of wonder for the children. They looked around at each other and giggled at the possibilities. As soon as we agreed upon this as a title for our writing, the imaginative and creative abilities of the children were well stimulated. Just this one single notion captivated them, for it captured the essence of all that was unknown, yet waiting to be discovered in a new place. From then on students arrived at the music room door eager and willing to explore the mysteries of Isaiah’s garage with me.

In the creation of this piece of work, ‘telling’ took several different forms. The writing that we did individually and then collectively, represented only one form of telling. Students were also ‘telling’ in their preliminary preparation for

Wild Things

writing, movement vocabulary explorations. They read the meanings and then told the meaning kinesthetically for the words “bend, twist, stretch and shrink” for example, through body actions. When other students read their meaning they guessed the name of the word. They read meaning into the movement and then announced their ‘telling’ out loud. As well, students were ‘telling’ when they brought their favorite pieces of writing to the group for our collaborative writing of the poem. They were ‘telling’ when they interpreted the meaning of the poem into movement phrases. They were once again ‘telling’ for a purpose when they ‘told’ the audience in their final performance all that they knew and were developmentally capable of ‘telling’ about what those wild things were really like who lived in Isaiah’s Garage.

CONCLUSIONS

Sensing is something we have little choice about doing. We can shut down our senses in various ways or we can consciously tune in to them. We can heighten one sense by deliberately shutting out others or we can focus on certain senses more than others by habit, circumstance or choice but we can’t really make them go away. Sensory impressions about life are part of who we are as humans.

Once sensations have been received in the brain, then perceptions are formed. These perceptions inform our actions. For the purposes of this study I am most interested in the expressive actions that we take. If humans choose to express ideas, feelings or reactions in an artistic way then there are a variety of
mediums they may choose individually. Drama, music, art, speaking or writing are all mediums that could be chosen for expression. Dance could be one medium that is chosen to express perceptions. For the purposes of education I believe that writing enhances cognitive development when integrated with dance but I am well aware that there are interconnections between all the disciplines that could provide dynamic artistic adventures for students in the expression of thoughts, feelings and ideas.

Recognition of the sequence of sensing, feeling and telling is a fundamental part of my definition of dancemaking. Working in this way honors the body as a source of lived experience and facilitates dancemaking from the inside out. Students learn to become authorities about their own impressions of life by learning to sense, feel and tell their own body stories through dance.
CHAPTER FOUR:
PERCEPTUAL, CREATIVE AND AESTHETIC
DEVELOPMENT IN DANCE EDUCATION EXPERIENCE.

There are a variety of factors that inform the choice an individual has whether to dance or not. I have examined a progression of these factors at the beginning of this chapter for I believe they are important considerations students make in order to be mindfully and bodily present to the dance experience. Without having made some of these choices I believe students will be unable to develop to their full potential perceptually, creatively and aesthetically as they would if they were ready and present to the experience.

In Order to Dance...

Young children dance with spontaneity and abandonment which dissipates as they approach school age. By the time children enter the school system there is a wide range of factors that limits their desire and ability to move freely and without inhibition. In her book *Gestures of Genius*, Rachel Vigier quotes Simone de Beauvoir as saying “To inhabit one’s body is cause for celebration” (Vigier, 1994). Young children inhabit their bodies when they dance freely and expressively. May I presume that when we are born we come into the world fully inhabiting that precious form that houses life in the shape of

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one's human body? As birthdays unfold and the form is shaped by individual personas and in celebrating the passing of years, children for the most part lose the ability to celebrate the joy of human movement by dancing freely when invited to do so in a classroom setting.

Opinions, censure, ideas, memories, ridicule, comparisons, cultural notions, hormones, fear, physical limitations, emotional needs and social identity apparently all silently collaborate to shut down a once freely inhabited body.

The physicality of our selves is basic to everything we do, yet it is one of the most neglected aspects of our upbringing and education, which often serve to trap the reflexes and cauterize the instincts" (Vigier, 1994).  

Furthermore, as young people develop and mature, there are a variety of factors characteristic to each stage of growth that continue to plague the innate impetuous ability to dance with the joy that I believe is the birthright of every human being.

Asking a typical ten year old boy in a public school classroom to create a movement sequence with a friend should not be seen as akin to asking him to dance as Rumi, the Persian poet from ancient times wrote, so as to “rise above both worlds, tearing your heart to pieces, and giving up your soul.” Ten year old boys may epitomize the analogy of reluctance to dance that is so common in this culture, however they are not alone for most of us do not inhabit our bodies in a fully embodied way. The way to re-inhabit physically alienated bodies is to

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83 Vigier, R. Ibid p. 10.
discover and nurture a healthy physical and mental self image of ourselves. To celebrate this same joy, is going to require consistent and ongoing effort on the part of all educators to teach in ways that enable this to happen naturally.

One of the ways to do this is to find ways to make meaningful connections between individuals and the curriculum through natural human movement. Human bodies contain residual individual movement resource packages of information that have served them well since that eventful day that they were born. Asking students to move in ways that are already comfortable and exist in their movement vocabulary is less intimidating than asking them to take big risks and move in unnatural and unpractised ways.

Another way is to utilize the aptitudes and capacities for experiencing life that are part of what makes us human. If we naturally take information in through the perceptual senses in order to survive, then it makes sense to capitalize upon this capacity in education. Living to our fullest human potential means honoring our innate sensual wisdom in all areas of our lives. It means reconnecting sensually in body, mind and spirit. There are appropriate ways of breaking this down for each grade, age and developmental level so that students when asked to dance respond agreeably, not as though we have asked them to "dance in their own blood (Nachmanovitch, 1990)."**85**

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**85** Nachmanovitch, S. *ibid.* p. 53.
If students were able to 'inhabit their bodies' comfortably, they would all know about being grounded, centered and present. They would feel uninhibited about physical expression and they would have a healthy and confident self image. Body and mind would function potentially as an integrated whole capable of 'doing' or 'dancing' mindfully and physically. They would become master of their own “guest house”86 and this would indeed be cause for celebration.

As they grow and learn about themselves and their world, it is desirable for young people to understand how the senses are pivotal to all learning. This not only creates effective educational practice but it creates a richer arts experience. The visual artist who notices details about light, depth and texture, the musician who attends to details of duration, dynamics, and tone and the dancer who incorporates use of levels, directions and space into compositions is using the senses cognitively in their learning. All of these elements are details waiting to be noticed sensually and teased into awareness perceptually and cognitively.

Wild Things Live In Isaiah's Garage...

To extract bodily knowledge in writing we agreed to slow down enough within the classroom setting to attend to those noticings that we might otherwise have overlooked. We found ourselves listening to small details that were gnawing at the edges of conscious thought. We pounced upon these isolated individual nuggets and collaboratively worked them into our developing work.

Choosing to Dance...

There are choices to be made before a student is ready and willing to attend to details. Dewey says there is “work to be done on the part of the percipient” (Greene, 1981).\(^7\) Students may be unreceptive for a variety of reasons. They may be emotionally, socially, physically, or cognitively blocked in their ability to engage in an activity. How does a teacher bring them to that place of receptivity? Let’s consider what some of the choices are that students make in order to be perceptually receptive to a dance experience.

Functional or Expressive Movement?

Rudolf von Laban’s descriptive analysis of movement is based upon his study of the conscious control of human movement and our ability to select and

change at will what our responses will be. Born in 1879 in Hungary his lifetime work, until he died in 1958, concerned the analysis of movement and was a seminal influence upon the dance experience of all dance and movement during the past century to the present day.\(^{88}\) He analysed all human movement as having two purposes. There is “the doing” which concerns all movements necessary for the objective preservation of life and “the dancing” which concerns all movements connected with the subjective feelings, expression, communication, and personality.\(^{89}\)

A movement may be performed for either a functional or an expressive purpose. The difference between the two depends upon the intent of the person who is moving. Did you intend to wave good bye to a friend? Or were you using the same movement to clean dirt off the window? The intent that you had is what makes the difference between a functional or expressive movement.

**Competitive or Expressive?**

Consider some of the similarities between athletes and dancers? Up to a point there are many similarities between the two. Athletes and dancers both require flexibility, stamina, strength, and balance to perform successfully in their chosen activity. Athletes and dancers both work with the same muscles and joints that have the same range of movement that the human body is limited by. The intent of the two differs. Athletes perform a task with the intent of

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competition while dancers perform a task with the intent of expressing a thought, idea or feeling. Laban theory states that athletes ‘do’ while dancers ‘dance’.

**To Discriminate or Not?**

When you teach your students what is your intent? Do you wish to stir them up and provide them with stimulation so that they will engage in their worlds intelligently and become active self motivated learners and decision makers? Can we “empower young people to discriminate and respond (Greene, 1981)?

The way that we look at the world around us when we are working with students affects this. We need to teach students what there is about a subject that needs to be noticed and questioned whether the topic be salmon spawning in the fall or snowflakes dancing in the winter.

In a dance class we may ask a student to observe fellow students improvising dance movements and then order their movements into a sequence for performance. The student is making choices about form, direction, timing, and use of space in order to accomplish this task. He is actively engaged in discriminating and responding in an artistic aesthetic capacity. This opportunity for active problem solving provides experience for living.

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Arts or Not?

For the few who remain convinced that the arts are a frill, you might as well let computers take over and run civilization from a motherboard in an underground silo. Without arts, we can pack our tents, admit we have lost our humanity, and all go home to an online, pay-per-grade, computer-based education (Jensen, 2001).91

When humans engage in artistic endeavours there is great potential for accomplishment. The arts provide opportunities for the development of creativity, social and emotional development, as well as physical and cognitive function that is important to success in all areas of life.

To Dance or Not?

Dance has unique and significant contributions to make in the total education of the child. Dance and the arts play a large part in the “humanizing” of man (sic) by encouraging creativity, discovery, inquiry and the overall process of flexible cognition, in a changing, challenging environment (Dance Committee of Canadian Association Physical Health Education and Recreation 1983).92

Choice is important again when we realize that each individual will choose an arts activity with the greatest personal appeal for varying reasons. Those who choose dance do so because of a strong appeal to engage in kinesthetic, visually spatial, musical or not, interpersonal artistic activity. Those students who choose dance as an elective do not always understand why they have to dance but many of them know it before they can explain it.

Active or Passive Student Engagement?

Another choice that students make, consciously or not, is whether to engage in an activity passively or actively. Passive behaviour is learned behaviour. We can attempt to teach students to become actively present to an experience. It requires keen observation skills and an openness to experiment and try a variety of activities that will provide entrances or openings to learning. Not all students are able to overcome passive behaviour. They may have emotional or social concerns that block their ability to engage fully. For others though, a safe learning environment where they feel secure about taking risks and trying new tasks will help them overcome this. Some students come to class ready and willing to participate fully and openly from the first day of class to the last. This is a desirable way to learn because when students are engaged actively there is maximum potential for growth and development.

Wild Things Live In Isaiah's Garage...

It is not enough to allow students to be passive observers of life. They need to be stimulated to engage actively in the living of their lives, in decision making and in shaping their lives. In teaching children how to experience aesthetically we are teaching them how to become actively involved in living and learning. In guiding my students through a creative investigation about imagined creatures
existing in a made up place in time they had the opportunity to make their own sense of what that meant for them as well as the opportunity to contribute to the decision making process of the group activity.

Advanced scientific methods of brain imaging have enabled researchers to study the brain in new ways. Many studies now prove that movement enhances all learning. Movements that may occur in a dance class could be complex and novel at the same time.

Highly complex and novel movements involve most of the brain. We suddenly must make rapid decisions, keep our attention up, monitor our emotions, remember our past, be alert for potential problems, create solutions on the spot, watch the expression of other faces, move quickly and gracefully — and somehow still remember the point of the activity (Corso, 1997 in Jensen, 2001).”93

Artistic Development

In this section on perceptual development I have included examples from current literature that support my supposition that perceptual development is a fundamental part of dancemaking in education.

Perceptual Development

Our whole body is designed as a fine tuned sensory receptor for collecting information. The sensory organs (eyes, ears and nose.) that pick up distant signals, are perched high atop the trunk of our body which serves as a stable bipod. The receptor systems sit on the bipod, meeting environment straight on. The parabolic ears

reflect sound into the ear canals, the eyes take in the periphery as well as the broad forward expanse, and the nose detects minute chemical messengers in our air. Augmenting these are the taste buds which monitor dissolved chemicals at the gateway to the gullet, and a vast array of touch receptors.

Every square inch of skin has receptors for touch, pressure, heat, cold and pain, with more on the lips, hands and face. Through these receptors, our spacesuit skin can gain an accurate reading of our external environment while protecting us from water loss. And internally, every movement sends a wild array of impulses speeding toward the brain to keep it informed of all changes in position and of where the body is in space. All of these sensations give us images of ourselves and our world and provide the essential raw material from which knowledge, thought and creativity can emerge (Hannaford, 1995).

*Learning*

Learning initiates in the human body via information received through our senses, yet traditional methods of teaching have long denied this important function about learning.

Through stimulating all the senses, dance goes beyond verbal language in engaging dancers and promoting the development of multisensory beings. What is learned in multisensory ways tends to be remembered longer” (Hanna, 1999).

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At times, students trying to describe something would make a gesture or movement in an attempt to draw forth and communicate meaning, but the word would evade them. Another student would jump in and say the word or phrase that satisfied the knowing for us all. Students were often using movement before words. They were developing spoken vocabulary and movement vocabulary simultaneously. They were reading body gestures and naming them as well as interpreting words and ideas through movement. Much interpersonal communication happened through listening, talking, reflecting and watching. Communicating with movement and connecting in a bodily sense through movement exploration gradually led students to a developing awareness and understanding about how to use the body as an expressive tool. They brought this new awareness with them when it was time to make the dance together.

Dance is multisensory: the sight of dancers moving in time and space; the sound of physical movement; the smell of the dancers' physical exertion; the tactile sensation of body parts touching the ground, other body parts, people or props, and the air around the dancers; the proxemic sense of distance between dancers and audience; and the kinesthetic experience (feeling of bodily movement and tension) (Hanna, 1999).  

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Our senses are capable of receiving vast amounts of information and are a huge part of body awareness. As educators it is important to understand the significance of sensory awareness and nurture it as a vital part of human functioning. We use all of our senses to take in and store information. Encounters incorporating the senses enhance perceptual growth in children.

Teaching

Howard Gardner riveted us out of the dark ages as educators in the 1980’s with his theory of Multiple Intelligences. As a result, educational thinking advanced significantly to empower all individual learners to understand themselves uniquely and to appreciate their own personal learning ‘intelligences’. Many of my secondary dance students quite readily self assess themselves and their multiple intelligences as being dominantly kinesthetic, visual spatial, intrapersonal, and as well, sometimes musical learners. All learning intelligences and styles are strengthened by developing ways of working with the senses that probe and explore both “inner and outer experience (Hanna, 1999).” In order to best achieve the goals of education students integrate their senses in a fully embodied way as they engage in dance making activities. If learning occurs through the senses then it is important that educators find ways that enable and maximize the senses to function and thrive.

In an educational setting we as teachers shape the 'art' experience. To the best of my ability I 'guided' my students through an educational experience by making some choices for them. I adapted the activity to their developmental and educational growth needs. I made choices about the context and the significance of events that took place. For example, I steered away from references to 'horned raptors' and violence and encouraged descriptive phrases about movement and the senses. By setting guidelines around activities I gave students structures to work within. The result was educationally appropriate to their learning about writing and movement.

Developing Perceptual Acuity

Maxine Greene suggests that in the effort to enhance perceptual acuity among students, the teacher might urge attending to the appearances of things around them in unaccustomed ways. If teachers can enable the students to detach what they see and hear from its use value for a time, from its mundane significance, the students may be brought in touch with shapes, masses, shadings, tonalities of which they are hardly likely to have been aware (Greene, 1981).98

To detach from its use value for a time means asking students to look at something with different intent. This means asking students to look at functional movement and give it expressive meaning or to ask them to 'dance' instead of

'do' a task. It begins with the teacher being 'perceptually and imaginatively' involved with the subject. I am amused when she says that a teacher ought to have experience at least "in shaping something approximating an expressive form." As teachers, we all know that one does not have to be an expert in the field in order to facilitate learning for others. What is important however is for teachers to "feel alive and in the world, excited about their subject matter, even in love with some of it." To say this is equivalent to saying that "teachers need to keep their own questions open, continually to break with created structures, striving to move beyond (Greene, 1981)."99

Wild Things Live In Isaiah's Garage...

As well, we have silently agreed to respect each others passions. They have seen my passion for dance and music and have learned to respect this in much the same way that I have learned to respect their passion for recess, sleepovers, birthday parties and soccer games.

Memory

"What is the connection between sensory physical awareness and emotion that gives us our memories? If you ask people to recall their earliest memory, they will usually go back to a time after the limbic system starts to mature. As the limbic system gears up,

99 Greene, M. Ibid. p. 81
nerve networks connect the sensory and motor base patterns to emotion and memory is established (Hannaford, 1995).  

Sometimes we ask students to delve into their memories in order to create a link between their experience and the experience of something other. When we do this we give them a vehicle to explore learning that is rich in personal context for them. It is in relation to all that is already unknown by us that we make meaning out of life. Many times in education we ask students to use 'remembered pictures' in their research of a topic.  

Memory is usually rich with bodily sensations of sight, sound, smell, taste, emotions and movements. The neural relatedness of these gives us our remembered pictures (Hannaford, 1995).

Whether we ask kindergarten students if they know what 'soft' feels like, or grade 2/3 students to recall descriptive phrases that will capture the smells that might lurk inside of an abandoned garage, we are asking them to draw upon the resource of their memory. I have seen grade 9 – 12 dance students asked to recall, write down and find a body shape that captures four memories from their lives that satisfies the feeling of 'growing up.' I have asked students to close their eyes while being led on a guided imagery exercise to capture one moment in their lives when they felt victimized or powerful. In activities like this we are offering students an opportunity to explore and enlarge upon their known lived experience from a starting point of memory. Memories can be used to expand upon that which students already have some knowledge about. Memories are


101 Hannaford C. Ibid. p. 98.
rich in sensory detail, bodily sensations, images and physical knowledge stored in the body.

This is an important time for physical imprinting, the development of body memory. As children encounter new information, they will move to embody it on all their muscles and senses. Movement facilitates the entrainment process in understanding relationships physically (Hannaford, 1995).

The connection between dredging up feelings, sensing and knowing through lived bodily experience and writing it down is a strong one. The writing and the movement that students produced was extracted from within. Students were physically invited to dwell in the imaginative realm, initially with their exploration of movement vocabulary, then with their writing and subsequently with their dancing. In searching to articulate that which was elusive they were writing down knowledge they had that was stored in body and mind. In looking through the lens of 'wild thing' they made new meaning by transforming known bodily information into a creative description that satisfied an emerging awareness of an unknown place called 'Isaiah's Garage'.

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Creative Development

I believe that every teacher selects their own teaching tools. I have included a description of two teaching tools that have become important ways for me to facilitate meaningful dance experiences. They are Anne Green Gilbert's conceptual approach to teaching dance and Pat Parker's "Creative Process". The reason I have included these at this time is to illustrate that over the years I have come to rely upon them as effective ways to get beginners of all ages readily creating interesting movement compositions immediately through use of the movement elements. Beginning dancers who struggle with 'steps' or 'styles' are not only less likely to be successful in the dancemaking activity but they will be far less capable of tuning in to important perceptual possibilities. In my practice these tools facilitate maximum creative development through their ready integration of experience.

For yourself and your students, keep your senses open for the experience of the creative moment in which the well of life bubbles (Wigman, 1966).\(^{103}\)

Imagination

It is through the imagination that creativity is developed. Maxine Greene refers to the 'release of the imagination' as pedagogy for thinking in new ways about teaching. Traditional teaching pedagogy holds imagination in tight contraction in terms of the ways that the imagination has been viewed in the

past. Maxine Greene would have us look at things in life “otherwise than they are” in order to “come closer to discovering how to be free” (Greene, 1981).¹⁰⁴

Set me a task in which I can put something of my very self, and it is a task no longer; it is joy; it is art (Bliss Carmen, 1899).¹⁰⁵

Students learn most effectively when they have opportunities to explore and play with concepts creatively. When their imaginations are released so that they are involved and have the opportunity to explore new ideas then the brain integrates new information into an existing framework of knowledge. Learning takes place when students integrate new material into the context of what they already know about any given topic. It is a personal experience affected by unique individual characteristics of each brain, body, past experience and attitude towards learning. By exploring ideas in a personal context learning becomes personally relevant and meaningful to students. Having the opportunity to put something of your “very self” into a learning activity creates joyful meaningful art.

Anne Green Gilbert’s Conceptual Approach to Creative Dance

Anne Green Gilbert is a well known dance educator from Seattle, Washington, who has taught creative dance to children for many years. Her childrens dance company ‘Kaleidoscope’ has been in existence since 1981. She offers teaching methodology workshops for teachers each summer in Seattle and

¹⁰⁴ Greene, M. 1981, ibid., p. 60
is a popular guest teacher and clinician in many countries around the world. Her book *Creative Dance for All Ages* outlines a conceptual approach to teaching creative dance based upon Laban’s movement elements.

I first took a teachers class from her in Bellevue, Washington, at an Orff Conference in 1998. This was the first opportunity I had to observe a childrens creative dance company and I clearly remember the impression it had upon me when I observed these children joyfully creating and competently performing their own dances before the large workshop audience. The live experience of observing boys and girls of mixed ages dancing fueled my interest in studying her method of teaching creative dance to children and since then I have attended many of her teaching sessions. As is likely common with most teachers, on first glance the movement elements appear somewhat overwhelming. Over the years I worked with the concepts, I came to understand them, gradually integrating more depth and meaning with each study session and building experience working with the movement elements.

The reason that I use this conceptual approach in working with students is similar to dance education pioneer Margaret H’Doubler’s words written in 1957.

Everyone has intellect, emotion, spirit, imagination, ability to move, and educable responses. Every normal person is equipped with the power to think, feel, will, and act. Anyone can dance within the limits of his or her capacities. To bring this to the realization of our youth necessitates an approach that is based on these fundamental human capacities (H’Doubler, 1957).  

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In dance education classes in the public school classroom we teach not only all the young people who signed up for private dance classes at age four but also all those other young people who did not sign up for those same dance classes. Most of the students we teach are beginners in understanding dance concepts. Only in rare circumstances are there opportunities to develop curriculum material for more than one grade level. Because I am the music teacher I see every child in the school for the duration of their school life. I am able to integrate dance into my music teaching and therefore am able to introduce each grade level to new concepts that over time instill some understanding of movement concepts in my students. But this is an exception to the rule. Even with my secondary students the majority of students each year are beginner dance students. It is not unusual to have first time dancers in the grade twelve class. For all of the above reasons, I teach a conceptual approach to creative dance built upon the movement elements. This approach provides continual opportunities for successful movement experiences with normal and adapted abilities as well as a sprinkling of studio trained dancers.

The following is Anne Green Gilbert's lesson plan format: Warming Up, Exploring the Concept, Developing Skills, Creating and Cooling Down. The learning processes that this format covers are: understanding, developing skills, creating, perceiving and evaluation which may occur several times throughout a successfully taught creative dance lesson (Gilbert, 1992). This lesson plan is

structured to provide for creative development opportunities in every dance lesson taught.

It is interesting to note that in actual practice, whenever we run out of time when we are teaching, that the creative activity part of a lesson is the part that invariably gets shortened or omitted entirely. In actuality, it is arguably the most important part of a lesson that we should protect for its intrinsic educational value. It is during creative exploration of material that new meaning is integrated into a students existing framework of understanding.

Georgette Schneer has been teaching dance improvisation for more than forty years in the United States. She has a notable performance record as a dancer to her credit and is well known as a dynamic teacher of dance improvisation who believes that “movement in the moment is a rich creative experience” (Alter, 1994).  

Central to the concept of improvisation is experiencing movement in the company of others. This coming together, (and) participating, feeds and stimulates each participant’s creative processes. It’s a social activity. It stands opposite “competitiveness” in the spectrum of human relating (Schneer, 1994).

*Emotional Freedom*

Creativity develops with wide and varied experiences where the ability to see the familiar in new ways is nurtured and encouraged in a supportive and intellectually stimulating environment. It flourishes in an environment where students feel emotionally safe to take risks and try out new ideas. Their
experimentation, play and exploratory activities can only take place in a setting where their efforts will be respected. For an individual to invent an independent, original approach to problem solving in front of their peers they need to feel that their efforts will be appreciated and not made fun of.

Once reasonable behaviour expectations are established in my classroom I try to nurture a safe environment for creative expression. I model and discuss attitudes that I think are important for music learning. A poster at the door asks people to "respect the musical tastes, abilities and cultures of all who enter here". I believe my music classroom is known to be a safe place to take risks and explore new ideas as well as a place to celebrate the artist in each of us.

Creative Process

One of the ways to consciously develop creativity in dance composition is by using creative process as a learning strategy to provide students with lots of practice in developing it. The model I refer to was developed by Pat Parker during twenty seven years of teaching dance education in Burnaby School District. Creative process is a term used in all arts disciplines but there are two

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reasons why I use this model. First, this model has been developed and used successfully by Pat, who is a dance educator, not something that is adapted from another arts form and applied topically to dance. Second, it is a local model which she shared and discussed with me and one that was developed specifically while teaching dance to elementary students at Stride Elementary School in Burnaby. I find it works well with beginner secondary students in the way that it breaks down each stage of the creative process (Parker, 1997).110

Students begin with **Inspiration:** an idea, image, concept or skill initiates the idea. Stimuli for the creation of movement sequences may begin with non musical auditory stimuli such as words, poetry, sound, prose, personal narrative or drama. Musical stimuli can be live, recorded, improvised or rehearsed. Stimuli from visual observations in the environment such as line, color, shape, patterns and designs also give ideas for creating dances. Perceptual tactile sensations through the interpretation of texture feeds and develops ideas. Students think, talk and imagine it. Next, in the **Exploratory** stage, students explore an idea by translating or transforming mental or verbal “pictures” into representational expressive movements. The **Composition** stage is where students must make deliberate choices about and organize their dance. They combine, arrange, sequence, refine, practice and polish their dance. The final stage is the **Performance** stage where a dance is presented to an audience. Dancers have an opportunity to communicate with others – the audience and to receive a response to the dance. The final part of this model of the creative process is the

Pondering stage where students have an opportunity to reflect, evaluate and assess effectiveness of the work and performance.

In education we most frequently work with large numbers of students. Working with group process with a large group of students provides a huge range of possible outcomes. I have often felt as a teacher that it is not unlike preparing to 'surf' the unknown when you begin the process. As a teacher in this situation you somehow know that you will be able to make the right decisions that need to be made but it is impossible to know in advance or even have any slight indication of what the nature of these choices will actually be. Planning is an important part of any program but the ability to be flexible and to respond to choices that come up in the course of a lesson is tantamount to successful teaching.

There are some students with brilliant ideas in the inspiration stage of the creative process. A few of these students will be able to see the inspiration through to the final performance but for many students, generating ideas is their strength and sometimes only contribution. However, with many active minds the possibilities increase and seem limitless. That's why it is important for the teacher to guide the exploration process when necessary or know when it is best to step back and let the exploration unfold on its own.
Wild Things Live In Isaiah's Garage...

We ended each writing session when we had relative consensus. When I collected the group around me to write collaboratively I scripted as we talked. I read back to them what was written down. They were very vocal about what they liked the sound of and what they didn't think fit. We would write and re read and write again until there were no changes to be made. In this case relative consensus was judged by me to be that point we arrived at where there was no more leaning forward, no more active engaged tension, no more talking. A satisfied silence would fall each time signified by students lifting their gaze from the written words and looking around at each other for that subtle group acknowledgement that there were indeed no more changes to be made to the verse.

Listening to the opinions and ideas of others provides students with many problem solving and decision making opportunities and with the help of the teacher the selection, sequencing, combining and arranging part of the composition process takes place. A wide range of learning experiences is usually happening for each individual group member. Each student has unique needs and, depending upon what that need is at the time, learning is affected. Some students may actually be actively involved in the entire process and have some kind of understanding of creative process while others may vary in what it is that they are actually learning about themselves and others during the same process. For the purposes of this thesis I consider the discussion of creativity as being about the creative process that students engage in while making dances.
In education it is inappropriate to judge children's dance by externally imposed adult oriented criteria.

In education the final product is subordinated to the creative process. It is the effect of the creative process on the child which is significant to his total growth (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1947).\(^{111}\)

**Structure**

In my work with students I have found ways for students to make meaning from their own lived experiences and to express this meaning through dance. This has been most successfully accomplished when activities have been structured inclusively to provide all students with the opportunity to be involved in a meaningful way with the inspiration, exploration, composition, presentation and reflection of a dance idea.

**Results**

At the start of this new century, for those with emotional balance and cognitive flexibility, the world will become their oyster. They will have social skills, self-discipline, and thinking skills to thrive in a fast-changing world (Jensen, 2001).\(^{112}\)

Creative experience in the arts enhances the potential for creativity in all disciplines but most importantly it prepares students for life. Creativity is a human instinct whereby problems that we encounter in life can be solved by creative and original thinking. The skills that students learn in creating dance compositions in school transfer to become meaningful in life. They become skills that will serve them for the rest of their lives in all fields of endeavour.

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Aesthetic Development

Aesthetic experiences require conscious participation in a work, a going out of energy, an ability to notice what is there to be noticed in the play, the poem, the quartet (Greene 1995).113

Practice expressing perceptions creatively through dance over time contributes to an individual’s overall aesthetic development. One of the reasons I have included a discussion on aesthetic development is because two years ago I heard about a group of curriculum writers who decided to cut the word ‘aesthetic’ out of an arts curriculum they were rewriting based on the grounds that ‘no one would understand what it meant.’ I found this instance to be a reality check about arts teaching and determined to write something that would help teachers ‘understand what it meant.’

In this section I include a description of aesthetic experience in an educational setting. In considering the possibilities for aesthetic experiencing that my students may have had at the time about their perception of ‘soft’ in a singing/movement activity, I want to illustrate that when there is an understanding of what aesthetic experience is, then it becomes possible to look for it and mindfully develop it through meaningful dancemaking experiences which honor the body as a place of wisdom and meaning making.

The Word "Aesthetic"

'Aesthetic' is one of those words that has the uncanny power to bring hushed silence to an educational discussion about teaching. Unless an individual has had the opportunity to study aesthetic theory or is well versed in an arts discipline, it is unlikely that they will have a ready understanding of the meaning of the word or at least be able to discuss it in the context of their own experience. Some teachers have an understanding of aesthetic that is memorized or borrowed but not actually integrated. There are times when I have been working with pre and post service educators when I know that the word is a mystery word to them; one of those hazy words that makes them uncomfortable because of its strangeness. The danger with this state of understanding is that those teachers who have never encountered the word or who do not understand its meaning are unable to talk about it meaningfully.

'Aesthetic' is as a concept to be embraced by arts educators. It should best be argued about and tossed around fearlessly at staffroom tables until it is commonly understood and owned so that teaching mindfully brings about aesthetic development in their work with students.

The etymology of the word aesthetics is derived from aesthesis, the Greek word for sense perception (Fraleigh, 1987). We all have the capacity to have sensory perceptions about an experience which is an underlying prerequisite to experiencing the world aesthetically.

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Illustrating Aesthetic Experience

I was teaching the kindergarten class an action song involving singing and movement near the end of the school year. At the very end of the song during one of those potent moments of silence that happens with music and dance experiences, I was struck by the variety of observable, physical behavioural responses that I observed in the duration of those few seconds of silence. Were they thinking about the concept of ‘soft’? I asked the children a few questions and then wrote up an analysis of my observations of what might have been happening aesthetically and developmentally for them. The only thing that validates my observations is the fact that this was near the close of the school year and so I knew the students quite well. Otherwise, in my quest to apprehend an understanding of lived aesthetic experience and to tell about it, this writing is actually only speculation of what might have been happening for students who certainly were too young to explain it to me in terms of aesthetic theory. I think it illustrates one teacher’s way of thinking about aesthetic experiencing that may be useful for other teachers to read and think about.
IN A CABIN IN THE WOODS:
REFLECTING UPON AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE
DURING A MOVEMENT/SINGING ACTIVITY
WITH KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN
IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING.

What might aesthetic experience look like for kindergarten children during a movement/singing activity?
The kindergarten class is sitting closely together in a circle on the music room floor singing a rhyme about petting a little rabbit. Earlier they came through the door for their music time, sweaty, active and loud as they straggled in from a noisy recess time outdoors. It has taken twenty minutes of carefully chosen activities to lead up to this degree of focus and concentrated attention. Right now, they are intently engrossed with their singing. Pausing in the song, the teacher asks the students if any of them have ever petted a "little rabbit". Some nod their heads remembering the
experience while others cast blankly around in their minds curious yet unknowing about what it might be like. The teacher touches Sonia’s fleece vest beside her and says, “Touching this fleece vest is almost as soft as touching a little rabbit’s fur.” A couple of students show a glimmer of comprehension because they too, have touched Sonia’s fleece vest and can associate that feeling of softness with their imagined concept of ‘little rabbit’. Some have perhaps forgotten and are reconnecting the memory with this perceptual clue about the tactile sense of softness. They go back to their singing. “Come little rabbit, come inside, safe with me abide.” There are several seconds of absolute focused silence at the end of their singing as they sit quietly stroking their hands in unison as if stroking rabbit fur. It is truly a magical moment, a reflective moment. There is a quiet air of contemplation surrounding the group.

WHAT HAS JUST HAPPENED IN THE COURSE OF THE LAST FEW MINUTES?
Were these students engaged in aesthetic experiencing? Was there an opportunity for aesthetic experiencing? If we consider Monroe Beardsley’s "criteria of the aesthetic character of experience" (Beardsley 1982), it is possible to notice several indicators about this activity that suggest that aesthetic experiencing may have been happening in this activity at least for some of the students. During this activity, there was for the most part fixed attention upon the activity. The degree of involvement in performing the physical actions and the singing with the teacher indicated ‘intense engagement and a diminished concern for the past and present’. DID FELT FREEDOM EXIST? At the beginning of the class, students needed much teacher activity to control their wandering focus. Having expended much physical energy at this point in their day both with an active outdoor recess break and a subsequent gross motor physical activity, these children seemed ready to sit down and sing. The age interest ‘hook’ about
a 'little rabbit' seemed appropriate to their age and interest level and so they chose to participate readily. They seemed content to sing it over several times.

WAS THERE EMOTIONAL DISTANCING? Not one of these children appeared to believe that their hands were real rabbits. There was no evidence of fear about being bitten or worry over trying to control a wild animal. They knew and would have been able to say that they were pretending.

WAS THERE ACTIVE DISCOVERY? Students appeared to have been challenged by a variety of stimuli including thought, emotion, physical movement, social process, creative discovery, perceptual stimulation and the opportunity for aesthetic experience.

WAS THERE A SATISFIED SENSE OF KNOWING? A sense of satisfaction seemed to grow and evolve from the beginning of the song until the end. In fact, from the first repetition to the third repetition, with discussion and feedback from the teacher each time, there appeared to be
an increase both in participation, understanding, discovery and satisfaction. It seemed that as new images, feelings and sensations were integrated into the student’s existing knowledge of their conception of ‘softness’ and ‘little rabbit’ some instinctual quest for growth and development was satisfactorily met. It seems quite relevant to the experience that the perceptual quality of touch was an integral part of the process. DID THESE STUDENTS THEN HAVE AN AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE DURING THIS ACTIVITY?

There were a few seconds of mesmerized silence at the end of the song, where the whole class sat seemingly still engaged contentedly in “something”. My teaching friend Andrea calls this time at the end of a song; a "magic moment". Is it possible during this momentary suspension in time, that the brain is processing and integrating new meaning as a result of what has just been experienced? I believe this happened for my kindergarten students and that their silence indicated that they likely
experienced this activity aesthetically. It may even be a safe conjecture to say that some students had experienced the concept of ‘little rabbit’ aesthetically, having integrated and synthesized new information into known experience resulting in a feeling of successful integration. It is highly probable that individual students were engaged differently in unique developmental areas of growth during this time. 

What is possibly happening developmentally in the areas of growth for students during this experience?

EMOTIONAL?

Marya’s lips are downturned and slightly pursed as she strokes her hand and there seems to be a degree of sadness about her expression. Is she feeling sorry for the rabbit because it needs shelter from the hunter mentioned at the beginning of the song? Is she feeling protective about rescuing it from the dangers outside? She could be relating this to concerns for her own safety or she could be relating it to concerns she may have about the safety of others.
EMOTIONAL AND/OR COGNITIVE?
Liana’s head is tilted ever so slightly to one side. She has a soft distant smile on her face and while she strokes her hand she is gazing beyond her hand seemingly lost in thoughts of her own.

SOCIAL (INTRA AND INTERPERSONAL)?
Bill is watching the boy beside him so much so in fact that he actually misses contact with his own hand completely several times. He is not so much concerned with his own involvement in this activity as he is fascinated with observing another person’s experience of the same activity.

He is observing the other person’s experience and he may or may not be relating it back to his own experience.

PERCEPTION (SENSE OF TOUCH) COGNITIVE (MEANING OF SOFT)?
Tai Ki is not stroking her own hand at all. She sits quietly for a few moments and then she tentatively reaches out and touches Sonia’s vest. She is timid and shy in her movements but when she touches the fleece vest, a fleeting smile of pleasure lights up her face. Is this the pleasure of
meaningful connection between the new concept of soft as an English word with her already known bodily aware Korean understanding of the same concept?

PHYSICAL MOVEMENT?

Several students are not particularly focused on their hands nor their singing. They are physically swaying from side to side and appear to be gratified by this simple gross motor activity.

CREATIVE GROWTH (PROBLEM SOLVING, EXPLORATION)?

Walter reaches up towards his face and strokes his cheek. Then he moves his hand to the carpet. He doesn't stay long at the carpet because the carpet is scratchy and not soft at all. He strokes his corduroy pants but is not satisfied with them either. He finally reaches back up to his cheek and leaves his hand there as he considers possibilities for meaning.

AESTHETIC GROWTH?

These children have had a variety of opportunities to experience aesthetic growth in their lives by the time they enter kindergarten.
Experiences at home, in their interactions with nature, with their classroom teacher and with their music teacher indicate that they appear to engage easily in their appreciation of artistic beauty whether that be in art, literature, playground, library, home, dance, recess or singing and movement activity.

**Learning Outcomes:**

The above description considers how students may have been making meaningful connections from this classroom experience. Technically, the following outcomes were the music learning outcomes for the activity that I was aware of as I was teaching this activity.

Students will:

- develop control of breathing while singing
  - start and end together
  - match pitch
- use the singing voice as differentiated from the whispering, shouting or talking voice.
  - sing and move together rhythmically
  - perform physical body actions while singing
- listen and blend their voices with the group singing
- listen to their own singing
- listen to their neighbour singing
- blend their voice with others
- express feeling while interpreting the meaning of the song.

What are the educational implications of this activity?

Once we understand and can recognize the nature of the aesthetic experience in an educational setting then we are one step closer to being able to teach, assess, evaluate, account for and advocate for arts education in the public school system. The arts have a fundamental expressive potential for students to communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings and to make meaningful active connections in their words. Through arts experiences like this one, students learn to relate to themselves and others, to relate to life experiences in the world in unique and transformed ways. Their depth of understanding grows and they change and become different for having experienced life aesthetically.
One of Dewey's main points in *Art as Experience* is that aesthetic experience resides within the context of our ordinary life experience. In these essays he is seeking to restore the continuity of aesthetic experience with normal processes of living. He expounds a theory arguing that experience that is unifying and fulfilling is, or can be, a product of all aspects of life, not just the fine arts (Ross, 2001).²

It can initiate in arts education classes but it carries over into social interaction with peers and others, daily living, experiences with nature and all areas of students' lives. The artistic decisions and choices that children make in their interaction with artistic material in dance, art, music, drama or creative writing classes throughout their educational lives prepare them to become independent, critical, creative thinkers when they leave school.

*Transformation*

Arts experiences have the potential to change perceptions. Students can view a dance performance, discuss it and analyse it or hear what the choreographer was thinking about when it was choreographed initially and return for a second viewing and be amazed at how their perceptions have changed. In this way aesthetic appreciation develops creative and rigorous thinking skills.

Scientists' artistic experiences enhance their scientific imagination and creativity, according to Robert Root-Bernstein, MacArthur Prize Fellow, who has completed a study of nearly 150 scientific biographies. He found that almost all great scientists and inventors are also active in the arts (cited in Zweig, 1986, in Hanna).³

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It is the ability to look at the familiar in new ways and to make new meanings from the familiar that develops imagination.

To call for imaginative capacity is to work for the ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise. Recall Wallace Stevens's "Man with the Blue Guitar"

they said, "you have a blue guitar,
You do not play things as they are."
The man replied, "things as they are
Are changed upon the blue guitar."
And they said then, "but play, you must, "
A tune beyond us, yet ourselves,
A tune upon the blue guitar
Of things exactly as they are [(1937), 1964, p. 165]  (Greene, 1995).

Margaret Morris, one of the early twentieth century dancer writers, writes in the conclusion of her book in 1926 that the aesthetic goal of her work is to enrich the lives of all.

Finally, if, as I believe, health and happiness should be the basis for all art – it is reasonable that, to some extent at least, it should become a part of the life of all. There is no reason why average human beings should not develop strong, healthy bodies, and mental and physical control, as well as understanding and appreciation of form, colour and sound, in nature and in art – and in many cases even the power of artistic creation (Morris 1926:94 in Alter 1994).

Conclusions

The students that I worked with in the creation of "Wild Things Live in Isaiah’s Garage" were somehow primed and ready for the artistic experience of creating a dance through movement and writing. It was a pleasure teaching them for they were enthusiastic, energetic and very present to the experience. Since then I have considered what choices they made which contributed to their receptivity. They came to my music classroom with a background of literacy from their classroom teacher who spent time each day reading and writing with them. They were comfortable with their writing abilities and confident about exploring new territory. As well, they had had three years of movement and music related activities with me as their music teacher so they were comfortable exploring new movement territory with me.

In analysing the comfort level and readiness of students to attend to the experience I considered a variety of choices that were possibly made by them in order for them to be ready to dance. I think these possibilities indicate the choices that others also need to make in order to be ready for similar experiencing.

There is a wealth of information in current literature about the development of the perceptual in artistic endeavour in movement and dance education. Through integrating the literature into my concept of dancemaking I
wish to show just how strong the evidence is that perceptual development is an acute human function that we need to reclaim.

In my examination of creative development I have explored my philosophy about imagination and creativity as well as outlined two specific teaching tools that are important to the method I use to facilitate meaningful dancemaking experiences for my students.

I do not wish to take the concept of aesthetic experience for granted for I have had occasion in my teaching practice to observe some lack of understanding of its meaning. This is the reason that I have included discussion about it and an example of possibilities for that experience in a classroom setting.
In The Beginning

This study began with me as teacher knowing in my bones that something was instinctively right about the way that a dance project in my music classroom took on a life of its own. Like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, we followed the muse unquestionably for it led my students and me on an educationally significant journey. In listening to my teaching instincts, I became a researcher when I realized that this project held implications both for learning and teaching dance in an educational setting. At the time I had an emerging awareness about embodiment but I could have continued teaching for many years without ever defining my understanding further had I not had the opportunity during the course of my studies to move from instinct and knowing in my bones to a more mindful and articulate state of conscious knowledge about this experience.

Initially with my students, I structured movement exploration and writing activities and as soon as we uncovered a mysterious enough entry point to our adventure, the project took on an artistic life of its own. Something crucial happened in the very beginning of the project “Wild Things Live in Isaiah’s Garage” which significantly affected the outcome of the project. This was evidenced initially by the unspoken exchange of movement ideas when the
students were experimenting with movement ideas. When we began the writing process after the movement exploration it was curious to watch how these young children read meaning into movement at times and at other times moved to make meaning of the writing.

This has lead me to believe that young children experience life quite naturally in an embodied way. They are much more connected in a mindbody way in making sense of their environment than older students or adults. With a range of abilities in the class grouping and a variety of competencies at reading and writing it is easy to understand how they are still connected in mind and body in the ways that they make meaning of both moving and written exploration of ideas. Perhaps in the way that great significance is placed upon the ability to make sense of the world through written text we lose touch with much of that early mind body connectivity in leaving behind our embodied ways and assuming a singularly mindful way of looking at life.

An important lesson for teachers to ponder is to consider ways of teaching reading and writing that maintain responsive and interactive mindbody connection. I think it is of key significance to consider ways of incorporating reading and writing into movement education. This is an important connection that casts new understanding on the term 'literacy'. The relationship between the physical and the cognitive domains needs to be cherished as an open field of interconnectivity. This then defines that first instinctive 'noticing' I made as a teacher where my students were reading movement and moving to writing
simultaneously. My expanded vision as a researcher I believe has opened a

doorway of opportunity in my teaching for further study with implications for
reading, writing and dance in education.

Later On.

I chose the term dancemaking to describe the way I think about dance in
education. As a definition it suggests possibilities that move away from
traditional dance instruction methods and offers an opportunity to re-examine
movement education. For an optimal dance experience student needs are
fundamental to the learning process. The developmental needs of the student
are pivotal considerations of dancemaking experiences in the school system. In
education we are less mindful about a dance style being performed perfectly as
we are about students involved in a dance performing to the best of their ability
while experiencing age appropriate emotional, cognitive, physical and social
growth as their developmental needs dictate.

These needs are well served by tuning in students to their basic
perceptual inherency. In nature we are firstly sensing feeling creatures whose
basic survival is dependent upon our perception of sensory information received
in the mind from the bodily senses. Our technological society has provided many
interfaces which distance us from this fundamental nature. In education we have
a unique opportunity to make important learning connections by reconnecting
these lost links. My definition of dancemaking gives attention to reclaiming
sensory awareness as an important learning tool. In education this can be
achieved with a greater understanding and respect for the body as a site of knowledge, opportunity and creativity.

In my study of dance education I have come to realize that I have great respect for Rudolf von Laban and his lifelong investigation of movement analysis. Although he lived in troubled times and endured many difficulties in pursuing his life work the legacy that he was able to pass on to his students has had perhaps the most significant effect on movement education and modern dance in the course of the past century. Students of Laban have taken his theories and translated them into accessible teaching methods and somatic theories. It makes sense to me to use a conceptual approach to understanding the movement elements in order to provide immediate access for beginning dance students in an educational setting.

The approach that has been most accessible to me and which I have had the most success with has been Anne Green Gilbert's work. The best reason for using her method is very simple. It works. Instead of learning one dance technique with foreign terminology and complicated nuances of style, students discover that there is a simple tool kit of conceptual terms that they can immediately access in order to create interesting and successful movement compositions.

Anne Green Gilbert's interpretation of Laban's analysis of movement elements presents concepts in understandable everyday language that children
already know. Her movement ideas facilitate movement composition using movements that are an organic part of a child’s everyday life.

For example, I could begin with an exploration of the concept of locomotor movement using walking and running which are certainly familiar movements to children. I could cover skipping and sliding which are also comfortable traveling steps for most children. I would continue exploring in a sequential way the many ways of traveling which would build upon their existing knowledge when I introduced galloping, step hop, waltz run, cartwheeling and crabwalking. All of those familiar steps would then become the foundation for novel and creative exploration possibilities when I introduce other concepts. Students would then be invited to play with and transform the familiar by the conscious application of changes in size, speed, direction and effort in relation to basic traveling movement.

Students then own the tools with which to create their own movement sequences as opposed to mimicking or adapting someone else’s movement ideas. I like to think of their movement creations as movement that comes from within rather than from without. This approach to teaching creative dance has become an important part of how I facilitate dancemaking experiences.

A significant part of my study has been the consideration of Lowenfeld and Brittain’s definition of ‘areas of artistic growth’ in their work Creative and Mental Growth. Although it was originally written in 1947 as a guide for teachers of visual arts education I have been intrigued by the significance they place upon
perceptual, creative and aesthetic development as areas of artistic growth. It has been useful in this study to measure these concepts against "Wild Things Live In Isaiah's Garage". Most importantly I appreciate their validation of the perceptual realm as an educationally significant learning connection. They also point out that creativity and aesthetic development need to be mindfully developed in arts education. When students engage in the creative process they make artistic decisions about their own work and in the process learn how to be better artists, thinkers and decision makers. All of this contributes to aesthetic development.

It is almost a century since John Dewey wrote about integrating mind and body functions. This information is not new but almost a century later myths still exist that undermine our programs. To fully understand the place of dance in education it is important to recognize it as an embodied activity that enriches students educational experience during their school years in preparation for the rest of their lives. As educators it is important to think beyond our classroom at times in order to analyse what the issue at hand is and then to decide upon a course of action related to what is feasible and appropriate to the best interests of the participants involved in the issue.

In the past century dance education has survived as an important visual and performing arts discipline in some pockets of the school system. Dance is still relatively fragile as an elective course selection at the secondary level where it is important to advocate for the value of dance education in order to promote and protect dance programs. It is important to provide dance education
coursework for student teacher education and as an available professional development resource for those already teaching.

In a new century faced with new challenges that are radically different from the challenges of the past, we have much to gain by educating students how to inhabit their bodies mindfully. As learning initiates with sensory input to the brain so our teaching methods should reflect understanding of this basic procedural function about learning. By developing perceptual acuity in students, teachers enable student learning. By providing opportunities for students to develop their creative talents we are teaching them skills that will serve them in an embodied way in all areas of their lives. Developing aesthetic literacy expands an awareness of the world. It empowers students to become fully awake to the world. As dance educators preparing students to actively engage in their worlds in a new century it is important to educate students so that they are literate in an embodied way, perceptually alert, creatively active and aesthetically aware of opportunities, choices and possibilities they will encounter in their lives.

Next

I have written so that dance educators wearing hats of all curricular colours may consider, not only what this project offers but so that they too may look reflectively at their own dance education practice in a conjoined quest to fully understand the potential dance has to educate in an embodied and mindful way. I consider my findings to be somewhat of a snapshot in time of a dance in progress which will be continued Monday morning back in the classroom. As I
will be doing I urge you to look critically at those 'Aha' moments when you are certain that you have witnessed embodied dancemaking for I am convinced that the most significant educational legacy we can provide for students is that they leave school fully inhabiting their bodies. That will indeed be cause for celebration.
Go ahead! No one is looking! Jété down the hall, do a triple turn and then pose dramatically in arabesque at my classroom door before slipping inside for a moment to muse upon some reflections I have about an exciting piece of student art involving embodied writing and dance making. My Gr. 2/3 music class and I used a collaborative group process to create a dance called “Wild Things Live In Isaiah’s Garage”. First, we wrote a very cool poem together. Inspired by the success of their own innate creativity, thus far, students then narrated the text onto an audio cassette tape recording which was interspersed with mysterious sound effects and lively music selections. The final step was to create a dance. The following is the original poem.

**Wild Things Live In Isaiah’s Garage**

*Spring 2001*

*by Cheryl Kay*

Don’t go into Isaiah’s garage
Because wild things live in there.
It’s dark and dusty with oil on the ground.
You can hear those wild spirit things
Moaning and groaning... weird eerie noises...
With mean reflections in the mirror.

It smells like skunks so you tiptoe carefully.
You don’t want to get lost in Isaiah’s garage
Because the wild things will gather round you.
That will make you start to shake.
Then you will feel faint and you will shiver
And twirl around quickly
To make sure nothing lurks in the shadows.

Wild things swing from the rafters.
They jump down and crouch on the ground.
Dust swirls up from their feet
And the floor cracks open.
Wild Things

Power walkin' stompin', bare feet trompin'
See the wild things dance
Wild things, wild things, wild things
Dance all night.

When they want to disappear from sight
There will be a burst of smoke... an explosion...
Because they want to trick you.
They will just blow up and fade away...
Disappearing into the fog
That sits in the corner of Isaiah's Garage.

The incentive to begin this project arose from graduate level coursework I was doing at the time on embodiment and curriculum inquiry. In order to unravel the full truth of our own lived experiences, we often began class by inhabiting the body through movement first. We then spent time writing and dancing about the wisdom we discovered. From first hand experience, I understood the power of this way of working and wanted to translate it into my practical teaching; to empower my students in turn, to experience ownership, joy and validation of their own work in a similar way.

Our Burnaby District Festival of Dance was approaching. The initial seeds of thought that I had prior to beginning a dance for it pivoted around three separate notions. First, I planned to use our school district-wide fine arts theme "wild thing." I knew I wanted to use masks and intended the dance to 'hang' from the structure of student writing. The rest I planned to unravel in context with students. I had no fixed ideas about how this would evolve but knew that I wanted to engage in an interactive process with my students to create together. I was prepared to explore any of several avenues that might open up. Teacher attitude was a key part of the process in which we engaged. There was just enough structure to begin working but also a readiness on my part to allow students to guide the outcome.

Structure is an important part of teaching but so is openness. I held clearly defined behavioral expectations of my students based upon consideration and respect for others. I am reminded of a mantra from my own teacher training days that stated that "Everything is mandatory but negotiable." Therefore, confident that negotiation was desirable I was able to embrace openness in creative expression. I had a willingness to risk outcomes knowing that various possibilities would arise. As a group, I knew we would have to make choices and decisions. I wanted student input to drive the project.
In teaching this way, a teacher is required to think on one's feet; to maintain an ongoing awareness of the need to continually evaluate, rephrase and redirect activities. Many dance teachers resort to the safer method of 'laying on dance steps' and actually suffocate the creative process with too much structure. Once committed to opening up the creative decision making process in a group, one needs to be comfortable even if they don't know where to go next. I knew that the worst that could happen would be that we might change to another activity. Later in the day one can give oneself time to reflect upon what happened and to develop new strategies and directions for continuation next class. The process may be slower for beginning teachers who don't have the same bank of experience to draw upon as experienced teachers have, however their process should involve similar attitudes and behaviours towards opening up the creative possibilities of a lesson.

Description of the Project

Initially, some groundwork prewriting activity was necessary so that the final writing would contain as much movement vocabulary as possible. I 'front end loaded' the project when I gave my students tools both to create their own dance movements and to contribute to the choreography of the piece as suggested by movement words. We did vocabulary building and out of the cupboard came word cards with non locomotor movement words, such as bend, twist, stretch, turn, crunch, squirm, melt, and punch. My teaching goal was to familiarize students with movement vocabulary by exploring a variety of physical activities using the body to demonstrate the meaning of each word. I wanted to reinforce an embodied understanding of the word meanings that they might chose to use in their later written expression.

While exploring the movement card, we talked and analysed what was happening in the body while doing the action words. For example, with the word 'bend' we ended up having quite a lengthy investigation of all the hinged joints in the body, which undeniably opened up new movement possibilities for these children. The specific goal in this activity was to develop the necessary body awareness in order to accomplish specific physical movements. In one activity I chose a card from the pile and students would demonstrate a movement that fit that selection. Next, students chose three cards in each group and were asked to create a movement sequence that would physically demonstrate their three words. The class was then asked to guess which words were used in the small group compositions. By the end of the exploration, students became very astute at reading each other's body movements and in portraying their own understanding of the words physically.

When it came time to write, rolls of paper were spread out on the floor and I posed a series of four questions to students. The questions were:
Where do wild things live?

What do they look like?

How do they move?

How do they disappear?

We wrote about one question during each of four sessions. Each session involved initial discussion followed by free flow writing on long rolls of paper. After writing, discussing and sharing, students were asked to go back to their work and circle favorite phrases that captured interesting ideas and feelings. While writing the poem, we ended with a collective consolidation process whereby I posed questions, clarified student responses and scripted student ideas into one main verse at a time.

At the end of day one, I noticed a tiny scribbled phrase in the corner of one of the rolls stating that "wild things live in Isaiah’s garage." As I commented upon and talked about this phrase with the children, I realized that it contained a feeling of mystery and provoked a sense of wonder for the children. They looked around at each other and giggled at the possibilities. As soon as we agreed upon this as a title for our writing, the imaginative and creative juices of the children were well stimulated. Just this one single notion captivated them, for it captured the essence of all that was unknown, yet waiting to be discovered in a new place. From then on students arrived at the music room door eager and willing to explore the mysteries of Isaiah’s garage with me.

The classroom teacher and I worked together to adapt a mask onto cardboard. Our teacher aide precut the masks. Students then worked with their teacher to paint them during an art activity in the classroom. We attached black elastic around the back of the mask and spent quite a bit of time fitting the masks to the students' heads so students could see easily and move without restriction. I was not particularly aware of any performance anxiety or inhibitions that these particular students had but I am sure that the masks helped create individual personas that enhanced their portrayal of 'wild thing'.

The process of writing and narrating our script onto an audio cassette tape took six weeks while the actual dance making took two weeks to complete. When the writing was finished, I was aware of how 'primed' the students were to create their dance. They were virtually bursting with movement ideas. These children had been keenly interested in the creation of the written work and continued to be when it came time to create their dance. They demonstrated enthusiastic involvement and commitment to this piece of work both in their writing and in their
dance making activity. I believe that the journey I led them on enabled them to stretch and learn in new ways and to express themselves in an embodied way.

The deadline was yet another limitation to be met but one we worked towards with a growing sense of excitement, challenge and anticipation. Some students were aware of a deadline and may have picked up on my sense of urgency that I surely passed on to them. Near the end, I sometimes wished we had had more time to indulge in the dance making process. I was plagued with urges to make the choreography more sophisticated but I resisted as best I could and allowed the children’s ideas to shape the dance. While I wanted there to be more time for dance making at the end, I was also aware that the initial exploration upon which we had spent so much time, was absolutely essential to student development and understanding. In the end, this was the real reason that we were able to put the dance together as quickly as we did.

The exploration and development of body awareness was an essential part of the process of dance making, especially as I wanted the dance making to arise from within the students own lived experience. I had primed the project by providing my students with prewriting opportunities to explore movement vocabulary physically. By exploring the words physically and creatively before engaging in writing, students integrated them into their existing movement vocabulary in an embodied way. This was an important part of the success of the project. Students were excited by the creative possibilities that became apparent to them as they strove to make new meaning of this curious place called Isaiah’s Garage.

Everything was ready. It was ‘show time’. Students stood with masks in hand, costumed and ready to perform. I helped them take their places on the dance floor and as their piece was being introduced, I realized that I could have left the building and the dance would have been just as successful without me there. By now my students truly did not need me. The writing and the dance making had come from within themselves and they were ready to share their work. These young people had seized upon the notion of Isaiah’s Garage and wrestled it into meaningful art. When I asked them what these wild things looked like they told me what to write and then how to dance meaning into it. They were the creators and I their muse. It was with great satisfaction that I watched them demonstrate ownership of their story through dance. As an educator it was immensely rewarding to know that I had given them wings with which to fly and that they were indeed flying on their own.

A Community of Learners

Each student brings a diverse range of lived experience to their work at school. This particular group of students is fortunate to live in a home, school and district environment that values the importance of arts education including dance education. In considering the history of
the class, their group interaction, their home environment, school setting and district climate, there is evidence of a healthy supportive arts learning environment both for students and teachers. As my students felt secure and able to launch themselves willingly into this project so, too, did I as a teacher know that I teach in a school district environment where artistic endeavour is encouraged and supported.

This group of students, for the most part, has been together since kindergarten. I taught them music for three years previously and so we shared many music learning and performance experiences together. Behaviour was not an issue, partly because of the class makeup, but also because of consistent classroom teacher expectations. As a group they demonstrated caring and cooperative behaviours towards each other, typical in my opinion of a small school setting. As well there were some strong “artistic” leaders in the group. Obviously, a cooperative environment is important to build trust and develop the social skills required to work together collaboratively.

Once reasonable behavioural expectations are established in my classroom, I try to nurture a safe environment for creative expression. I model and discuss attitudes that I think are important for music/dance learning. A poster at the door asks people to “respect the musical tastes, abilities and cultures of all who enter here”. I believe my music classroom is known to be a safe place to take risks and explore new ideas as well as a place to celebrate the “artist” within each of us.

In music class we have a common dialogue based upon many singing, music and dance experiences together. I integrate movement into my music teaching using Anne Green Gilbert’s conceptual approach to teaching Creative Dance for all Ages. This approach includes practice with and development of a shared movement vocabulary built upon the movement elements of Space, Time, Force, Body and Movement. Students learn terms such as formations, directions, pathways, levels, lines, and shapes. The B.C. Ministry of Education Curriculum IRP’s list the teaching of movement elements as an integral part of the dance curriculum for all grades. I find this conceptual approach to teaching dance inclusive in an educational setting for it gives all students accessible and immediate tools to create interesting movement sequences (Gilbert 1992).

This particular group of students brought with them skills from a rich classroom exposure to children’s literature. Their classroom teacher reads and writes with them daily. As well, we have silently agreed to respect each other’s passions. They have seen my love of dance and music and have learned to respect this in much the same way that I have learned to respect their desire for recess, sleepovers, birthday parties and soccer games.
The Embodied Writing and Dance Making Connection.

We shared a desire to create and by attending to the senses we uncovered bits and pieces of words that strung together to capture elusive thoughts, ideas and feelings. When asked what Isaiah's garage smelled like students spoke almost at once. "It's dark," said one student. It's dusty," spoke another, "there's oil on the ground." Tarina wrinkled up her nose and said, "It smells like skunks." There was a pause as they looked around at each other as if sharing some mutual secret childhood understanding about all those dark scary places out there. Collectively, they knew intuitively that in such an instance, one would not feel so brave. Each brain was searching to capture the essence of that feeling. "So you tiptoe," said one boy. "Carefully", said another. "Cautiously," said the last. The sense of smell memory was but one example of extracting information stored first in the body. As we built the writing together, we fed off the creation and worked through the process until our collective questions had been answered.

At times, students in trying to find ways to describe their thoughts would make a gesture or movement in an attempt to draw forth and communicate meaning, but the word would evade them. Another student would jump in and say the word or phrase that satisfied the knowing for us all. Students were often using movement before words. They were developing spoken vocabulary and movement vocabulary simultaneously. They were reading body gestures and naming them as well as interpreting words and ideas through movement. Much interpersonal communication happened through listening, talking, reflecting and watching. Communicating with movement and connecting in a bodily sense through movement exploration gradually led students to a developing awareness and understanding about how to use the body as an expressive tool. They brought this new awareness with them when it was time to make the dance together.

While creating the dance, the sound effects and the music enhanced the experience. The sound of their own children's voices narrating the text inspired them greatly for they were kept in immediate contact with their story. They seemed quite uninhibited about expressing their ideas physically with the added inspiration of text, sound effects and music. An important part of the 'ownership' of this piece was the fact that they danced to children's voices and that they danced their own dance ideas as agreed upon and selected through the group process.

We ended each writing session when we had relative consensus. When I collected the group around me to write collaboratively, I scripted as we talked. I read back to them what was written down. They were very vocal about what they liked the sound of and what they did not think 'fit'. We would write and read and write again until there were no changes to be made. In this case, relative consensus was judged by me to be that point we arrived at where there was no
more leaning forward, no more active engaged tension, no more talking. A satisfied silence
would fall each time signified by students lifting their gaze from the written words. Students
looked around at each other for that subtle group affirmation that there were indeed no more
changes to be made in the writing.

There were many personally satisfying moments for the students particularly at the end of
a session, when we would pause and review what we had written or danced during our time
together. There were several times, when students were amazed that what they might not have
been able to do on their own, we had indeed accomplished as a group working together, taking
turns, listening to each other and feeding off the creative energy and thoughts of the group. The
collaborative process, which caused this group synergy, created a powerful learning experience.

Aesthetic Experience

Nelson Goodman, Howard Gardner and Viktor Lowenfeld offer the academic framework
for the origins of my understanding of the aesthetic experience in an educational context. But it is
Maxine Greene who gives this understanding critical form when she says "Not only ought young
persons be provided with a range of experiences in perceiving and noticing. They ought to have
opportunities, in every classroom, to attend to the appearances of things from an aesthetic point
of view. If not, they are unlikely to be in a position to be challenged by what they see or hear.
And one of the great powers associated with the arts is the power to challenge expectations, to
break stereotypes, to change the ways in which persons apprehend the world (Greene, 1981, p.
155). I did not want my students just to comprehend the experience. I wanted them to
apprehend some meaning about 'wild thing'. I wanted them to become aware of their own
understanding of it by capturing it boldly.

It is not enough to allow students to be passive observers of life. They need to be
stimulated to engage actively in the living of their lives, in decision making and in shaping their
lives. In teaching children how to experience aesthetically we are teaching them how to become
actively involved in living and learning. In guiding my students through a creative investigation
about imagined creatures existing in a made up place in time, they had the opportunity to make
their own sense of what that meant for them as well as the opportunity to contribute to the
decision making process of the group activity.

Our project was defined by the limitations of masks, student writing, dance making, and
school district 'wild thing' fine arts theme. When I initially asked these students if they wanted to
make up a dance about wild things there was an enthusiastic and complete willingness to engage
in creating something as yet unknown. We came together and agreed in common to look through
the same lens towards the end goal. Without ever discussing it we mutually agreed to listen to
each other, to ourselves, to memories, to dreams and to those inner voices which defy description. We shared a sense of awe about this unknown experience and we desired to pursue this quest together. What was it really like “inside Isaiah’s garage”? By delving into our collective imaginations and searching for snippets of writing which embodied the feelings we had towards ‘wild thing’, we indeed captured the essence of it. By guiding students through a creative exploration of questioning and thinking they were able to unravel new meanings. The meaning that these children were able to make by integrating new imaginings into their own realm of known experience made this aesthetic experience educationally valuable.

Aesthetic experience expands and stretches our thinking in new and unknown ways. Words, thoughts, and feelings that evade conscious conceptualization in regulated ways can be extracted from other ways of knowing -- through the body, the senses, music, the voice, writing, mime, drama and through dance. They are all ways of knowing other than scientific method and process. Cognitive scientific process often denies the aesthetic experience and as educators we are educating in a fuller sense when we stimulate and encourage sensing, feeling, movement, imagination and thought in all areas of growth and development.

This work came from inside the body, mind and souls of seven and eight year olds. It was created collaboratively by searching every crevice of memory and capturing each moment of mystery that students could latch onto through their writing and dancing. I had been instrumental in the structuring and the facilitating of this piece of work but the students had created it through me. I had talked to them, inspired them, given them limitations, collected the results, ordered their movement ideas and been their greatest encourager while they worked. By the end, they did not need me in order for this piece of art to stand on its own. As I watched the joy and competence of ownership and learning that students demonstrated with their embodied writing and dance making, I learned yet again the value of group process. Most importantly, I reconfirm the absolute necessity of integrating dance education into the “curriculum”. Lastly, I reiterate that the aesthetic educational experience is vital to the well-being of all, is the catalyst for change and is the lens for perceiving the embodied world in which we live.
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