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Combined Perspectives: Re-determining Aesthetic Value through Cultural Immersion

By

Yang Wang

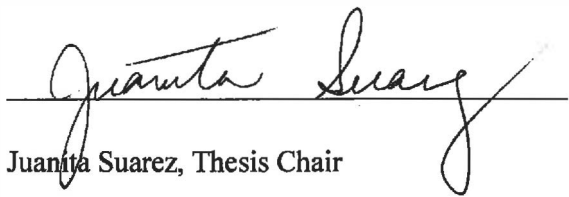
May 2014

**A thesis submitted to the Department of Dance of The College at Brockport in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts**

Combined Perspectives: Re-determining Aesthetic Value through Cultural Immersion

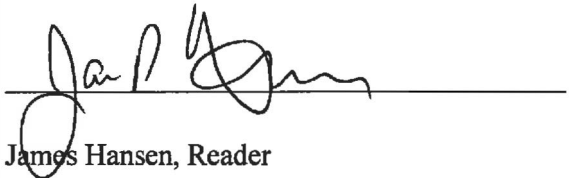
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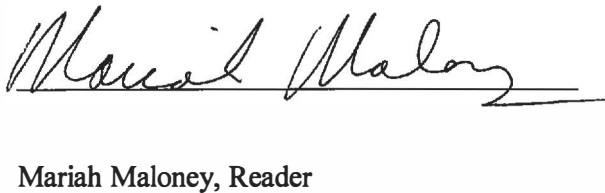
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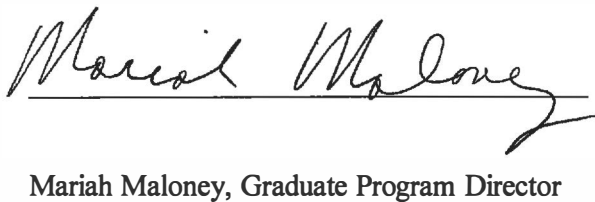
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Abstract

This study examines the shift of a personal aesthetic value in dance through experiencing the different dance educations and cultures in the different countries. Through the demonstration of the dance education I obtained in both China and the United States, I aim to illustrate why and how my previous aesthetics in dance and choreography were developed and expanded.

In Chapter two, it demonstrates a circular theory that I observed from the study of Chinese classical dance and American modern dance. Through deep analysis of the different dance training systems, aesthetics, and cultures, I explained why these two types of dance look differently although a circular motion similarly exists in both of the dance styles. The observation of Laban Movement Analysis furthered my research as it developed my acknowledgment of a circular theory and how it aesthetically and culturally influenced me as an international artist.

Through observing the movement qualities, space harmony, and choreographic procedures in different sections in the dance work *Time Line, Space Point*, I illustrated how my re-determination of aesthetic value in dance has been changed through a visual demonstration.

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Introduction

Aesthetic values of dance are not simply the way of appreciating a specific dance form; they can also be reflected in one's physical demonstration of movement. Since movement reflects cultural and social experience, it influences how one evaluates dance. As Harold Newton Lee, a dance scholar proclaimed, "Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy, as it is the attempt to understand one particular portion of experience and the nature of the value apprehended in that experience."¹ Even though the aesthetic values in different kinds of dance are different, I believe every dance exists in a complex network of relationship to other dances. The similarities could be found if one looks deeply into the origins and cultural backgrounds of different types of dance. Different evaluations are caused from the different cultural inflections. One's aesthetic value of one culture will be changed and influenced by experiencing another culture. I aim to examine and claim the change of one's aesthetic value in dance is not a one-step procedure; it progressively involves a re-evaluation in various areas which are in relation to dance. The most important thing for one who has learned and practiced two or more dance forms from different cultures is not to change the way he/she used to dance, but to acknowledge there is more possibility within one's own body and thinking.

Genres of value are diverse, including moral, practical, political, cultural, economic value, and others. Each kind of value is representative of a specific subject and knowledge. For example, political value embodies one's understanding of politics; cultural value contains one's acknowledgment of culture. Art, as one of the facets of culture, has its own value

¹ Harold Newton Lee, "Aesthetics and the experience of value," *Perception and Aesthetic Value*. (New York: Prentice Hall, 1938), 6.

which is called “Aesthetic value.” Aesthetic value is appreciation or judgment concerning the value of the appearance of an object, artistic phenomenon, or production and the emotional responses it evokes. The value of art connects to the agreeability, satisfaction, and pleasure of art works. That is to say, one’s judgment of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ art implicitly suggests the idea of whether the work is agreeable or not. The Scottish philosopher David Hume claimed a similar statement in his famous essay titled ‘Of the standard of taste,’ arguing that, “the important thing about art is its ‘agreeableness,’ the pleasure we derive from it, and that this is a matter of our sentiments, not its intrinsic nature.”² The object admitting the agreeableness is us—the human being. Since different people represent different social experiences, cultural backgrounds, behaviors, and living environment, it is complex and challenging to analyze and judge cultural aesthetics, one from another. Dance, as a type of art, and its aesthetic values varies. Different kinds of dance represent alternative aesthetics due to the diverse origins, cultural contexts, political affiliations, and philosophic approaches. As a dance performer, choreographer, artist, and scholar who has experienced the professional dance training of Chinese dance and American dance, I have come to acknowledge a progressive and gradual change in the way I perform, think, choreograph, and appreciate dance.

² Gordon Granham, “Art and pleasure,” *Philosophy of The Arts an Introduction to Aesthetics*. (London: Routledge, 2000), 4.

Chapter One

A shift in Aesthetic Value

Political Power and Its Influence in Dance

People from the area now known as China have recorded history more than five-thousand years old, and a larger cultural identity as being Chinese that is more than two-thousand years old. People who are not Chinese and who lack knowledge of Chinese history may think Chinese people are one large homogeneous group. However, individually there are fifty-six different ethnicities that make up the Chinese people today. Undoubtedly, there were other ethno-Chinese peoples throughout Chinese history that were either assimilated into the melting pot of Chinese culture and contributed their own cultural identity to the melting pot, or were destroyed along the way. As of 2012, The World Bank estimates China has more than 1.35 billion people, and they are spread over a land mass of 3,705,407 square miles. That is, a population $4\frac{1}{4}$ times that of America's, in a similar size land mass, yet with a recorded history that is more than five-thousand years older.

Since the time of the Qin Emperor who cemented China into a single nation two-thousand years ago, to the current communist central government in Beijing, the ruling authorities have attempted, very successfully, to consolidate the Chinese people into a single political union. One of the ways they have done this is through a mass campaign to have everyone speak a single language, Mandarin, and they have facilitated this through the education system. This has served the country well in regards to cultural, political and

economic cohesion. However, China still has a very large population spread over a very large land mass.

Government restrictions and socio-political movements from ancient China up until the mid-nineteenth century ossified the ideology, values, and autonomy of Chinese civilization. Of particular interest is the policy of isolationism dictated in 1433, by a Ming Dynasty Emperor. This policy subsequently called the Great Withdraw of 1433, scuttled China's Grand National Fleet and banned Chinese subjects from travelling abroad or importing foreign goods. The penalty for breaking this law was death by beheading. Chinese authorities felt they needed nothing from the outside world and they wanted to insulate China from outside influence. China's doors were closed. These isolationist policies held until the Opium Wars of the mid 1800s, when Western colonial powers effectively blasted China's door back open again in an effort to force economic trade with China. However, these isolationism policies would return again of during China's Communist Revolution when Chairman Mao, 1840, once again enacted policy of isolationism in an attempt to become self-reliant. These isolationist policies affected and hindered China in several ways. China's closed economic system and a largely poor and uneducated agrarian population prevented China from making large advancements in the arts and sciences. Further, its isolationism prevented it from assimilating any advancements made by the outside world.

Until the industrialization of China over the last three to four decades, the development of mass road and rail infrastructure, and the development of the internet and mobile networks for cell phones, many Chinese people were literally cut-off from accessing the outside world

including the rest of China. Government restrictions even prevented people from domestic travel. These factors severely limited the ability for thoughts and ideas to spread around freely as they do in western democracies, which also created cultural enclaves within Chinese society. As stated earlier, China is made up of a cohesion of over 1.35 billion people, made up of fifty-six different ethnicities spread over 3.7 million square miles, which until recently were very isolated from one another, let alone the outside world.

The isolation provided by geographical barriers and distance, from highlands to lowlands, oceans to mountains, north to south, east to west, has provided the different ethnicities of China the ability to maintain their own unique cultural routes, separate from, yet still maintaining that of the greater Chinese identity. These ancient regional groups have maintained their own character through cultural ties to ancient religious practices, oral and written histories passed down through many millennia, often a common language other than Mandarin (which most also speak), and a common taste for aesthetics and the arts, including dance. Not unlike most cultures, these individual regional or cultural groups within China have derived much of their characteristic preference for and development of aesthetics in art from the experiences of their ancient ancestors and what they experienced in their daily lives. Of course, they built upon these values throughout history up to contemporary times, yet still maintained a connection through time, space and place to those ancient times.

The Primitivity and Transformation of Chinese Folk Dance

The over five thousand year long history has shaped China into becoming a deep rooted country entwined with pieces of culture and history. Each of the fifty-six different ethnic

groups in China presents a primary feature, tradition, culture, art, and aesthetics. In the majority of the ethnic groups, dance originated from people's primitive living habit. For example, Tibet—one of the ethnic groups in China—has maintained its unique dance form as part of Tibetan life for over hundreds of years. In Tibet, people from male to female, children to senior, dance during their daily life, acknowledging the practice of Tibetan dance through their culture, religion, and the indigenous lifestyle. In Tibetan dance, “the same direction movement” means that one's arms and the feet move in the same direction. For example, the right arm and leg work in unison with each other; when the right arm is engaged the right leg automatically becomes engaged. This classical Tibetan movement was taken from Tibetans' daily life.

Tibet is a snow-covered highland; Tibetans live surrounded by numerous mountains. In ancient times as well as similarly today, the transportation was not as convenient as that in flatlands, Tibetans had to walk across mountains with a lot of heavy wood, water, and other living necessities on their backs in order to bring them to their destinations. Over time, after walking with heavy products on their backs for many years, most Tibetans have a leaned figure. In order to save physical strength in moving this way, Tibetans created a new way of walking, walking with the same sided leg and arm. The leaned figure and the new invented walking way were considered a special beauty for the Tibetans. Later on, Tibetans incorporated and designed these movement characteristics and qualities into their dance in order to identify a classicity, which is still maintained today. Tibetans made the same direction movement pattern one of the basic gaits in their dance, and aesthetically, considered

it the most natural and authentic beauty of their dancing body. Tibetans developed their dance movements on the basis of the same direction pattern and usually performed them in a big group during their ceremonies and events. Tibetan dance was developed as one of the most popular kinds of folk dance in mainland China.

Similar to Tibetan dance, many other folk dances had similar origins in terms of the development of people's engagement and experience in dance. Uygur, for example, represents people from Xinjiang province in China. Uygurs dance has a long history and rich resources. It is a precious representative of the Chinese national dance art treasure. The objective survival conditions made Uygurs optimistic and brave. Dance, had always been an important part of their lives, festivals, rituals, and ceremonies. Uygurs optimistic spirit is typical in their dance form. The integration of ethnics brought out the diversity of Uygur dance. According to the different functions of dance, Uygur dance has three forms: self-entertained dance, custom dance, and performing dance.

One of the most significant traditions of Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region is that women have to maintain long hair as well as wear a delicate hat on their head since they were young. They group their long, flowing hair into multiple braids and allow them to flow down to their lower backs. As a consequence, Uygur women instinctively have a chin up figure. They exaggerate the chin up shape in their dance during ceremonies and consider this movement an authentic expression of beauty. The sophisticated rhythm, dynamics, gestures, costumes, and technique enabled Uygur dance to be distinguished from other folk dances. In Uygur dance, both male and female dance a lot with syncopation in order to increase and

emphasize the characteristic in their dance. Women have typical movement of wrist circulation and upper body extension in demonstrating their feminine temperament, while men use quick shoulder shrug and big steps to express their manly characteristic. In Uygur dance, male and female dancers often dance in separate groups simultaneously or alternately, using their dance to attract the opposite sex. As a matter of fact, Uygur dance as well as most kinds of Chinese folk dance, has a typical man-woman partnership with an obvious and strong demonstration of the gender identity of male and female.

With the development and transformation of dance in China in the twentieth century, many widely known genres of folk dance were tied together and were established as one of the dance courses in most dance schools and academies in China, including Tibetan dance, Uygur dance, Mongolia dance, and Han dance. The most prominent feature of Chinese folk dance is its folk customs, which can be divided into five categories according to their different functions: Seasonal Custom dance; Life Custom dance (such as enjoyment, social mate, fitness sports, performing entertainer, etc.); Ritual Dance (such as dancing in the fertility ritual, Mitzvah, weddings, longevity, funerals, rituals, ceremonies and other military ceremony conducted; Belief Custom dance (such as Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, Primitive religion); and Labor Practice dance.

In each folk dance, the most fundamental and representative movements and rhythms were collected and choreographed into short dance sequences by early dance artists and educators. These types of dance were incorporated into the national folk dance teaching syllabus. From then on, nearly all the dancers are required to participate in the professional

training of Chinese folk dance at dance school. From a development perspective, the expansion of the education of Chinese folk dance, at some point, increased the interaction and communication of folk dance culture among different regions in mainland China. This promoted the transformation of the dance education system, as well as protected the culture and ethnic integrity of China. However, due to the influence of political restrictions and rigorous education system, the primitivity of most Chinese folk dance was not correctly, authentically, and aesthetically inherited and expanded in mainland China, especially in the Han ethnic group. Therefore, I see the potential negative influences exist in Chinese folk dance education system, which had affected most Han Chinese dancers as well as my acknowledgment and aesthetic value of dance as a dancer, choreographer, and educator.

The Issues in the Education of Chinese Folk Dance

Unlike Western or American educational systems, the Chinese education system is very rigid and constricted in the way subjects are taught and in the expected outcomes of academic and artistic assignments. In America and other Western cultures, creativity and innovation of thought and outcome are not only encouraged they are often rewarded. This is true for students and teachers alike. In China, however, teachers stick to a rigid form of instruction for their students that is standardized across the country. They expect a rigid and conforming response in return. In order to be accepted as the 'right' answer when responding in an oral or written fashion, answers need to be copied virtually verbatim from what the teacher has taught in class. This pattern has been revealed since ancient China during the Confucius

decade, “The ancient relationship between a teacher and students has been the spreading of knowledge. If the teacher says something the students must definitely obey him...”³

The same expectations are also held for artistic pursuits such as dance. Chinese dancers are taught from a very young age to duplicate exactly what their dance instructors are showing them. For example in folk dance, instead of maintaining the authentic nature of the dance form, all movements and steps must be rigidly reproduced from what the teacher has taught, from the simplest of movements and phrases to the most advanced ones, body posture, position, the pace of movement, spacing, timing, and even facial expressions. The outcome, whether it be taught from a school in the north, south, east or west of China, should be almost identical to the outcome of one taught on the complete opposite side of the county. The rewards and encouragement for individuality, creativity, or innovation in the Chinese dance education system is less active compared with most Western dance education systems, which maintained a formalist mode of teaching and learning in class.

Chinese dancers, as the affected population during and after the revolution of the Chinese dance education system, have been influenced by the teaching method of Chinese folk dance in terms of their aesthetics of dance as well as the way they think about dance. Even though students were encouraged to study relevant historical background of one specific folk dance culture, they have barely experienced the primitive cultural, spirit, and belief. They could hardly appreciate the aesthetics of folk dance movements as people who live with their folk dance style in accordance with their way of life and the culture of their group. All the

³ Richard H. Solomon, “The Pain and Rewards of Education,” *Mao’s Revolution and the Chinese Political Culture*. (California: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1971), 85.

gestures, rhythms, steps, and expressions Han dancers learned were based on the pure imitation from their dance instructors. Chinese folk dance, as a result, confronted a slight distortion during its expansion in Han China in terms of the primitivity and customs. It had been invisibly divided into two forms, the primitive folk dance and the academic folk dance. The immutable academic dance teaching mode made the so called professional folk dance training rigid due to the rigorous established movement instructions. These movement instructions of the school version folk dance are very specific and detailed. For instance, in the movements of the same direction pattern in Tibetan dance, each step establishes its specific focus, direction, rhythmic change, and pathways. Students were taught to lift or swing their arms and legs at a specific level while completing a whole phrase. Any move which deviated from this precise range would be considered wrong or fake. Tibetans, on the contrary, never purposely created any tempo, rhythm, or movement restrictions in their dance. The feature and aesthetics of Tibetan dance originated from Tibetans feeling and expression of the harmony within their life. Thus, the conventional movement tips made academic Tibetan dance lack authenticity and its natural features. Since the primitive Tibetan dance is not aimed to be teachable or be developed for any kind of performing art, but as a natural and authentic refraction of the enjoyment and happiness of an ethnic lifestyle.

The function of the primitive Uygur dance had also been changed in a similar way as Tibetan dance, since the academic style of Uygur dance in Han China missed its essential playful and entertaining customs. Precise rhythm, fast turns, and extreme back bending were added into Uygur dance in school as well as on stage. People thought Uygur dance looked

cool because of the advanced movements and fancy costumes rather than the custom of Uygur dance culture and Uygurs lifestyle that was portrayed. The distinguished male-female relationship in Uygur dance also reinforces Han Chinese existed acknowledgment of gender in dance that men must dance masculinely and women should demonstrate their feminine feature.

In my generation, not only students, but also teachers know little about the primitive Chinese folk dance culture since students were taught Tibetan dance in a similar way as their teachers were. Most characteristics of folk dance taught in Han China were and are according to the academic teaching syllabus. However, from student perspectives, are they able to appreciate the leaned figure and the same direction movement in Tibetan dance, a chin up shape in Uygur dance, or other features originated from different folk dance forms as a special beauty? Most students are not, because they live in big modern cities in flatlands, they do not need to carry heavy wood and water while walking, grow super long hair, obey religious rule such as not eating specific animals, and other customs that are maintained in other ethnic groups in China. Some Han Chinese dancers consider a leaned figure, the same direction movement pattern, and a chin up shape funny, abnormal, and weird, since their values of beauty in dance relate to an extended upper body shape, fluid movement quality, and long nice torso, which were influenced from the aesthetics in early Russian ballet, Chinese classical dance, and other types of dance. Therefore, even though Han Chinese dancers are aware of the origination of the characteristics of Tibetan dance culture, they have had little experience with them and hardly think they look beautiful.

The rigid teaching system of the distorted version of Chinese folk dance brought many limitations to Han Chinese dancers in terms of the autonomous creativity, the range of motion within their Kinesphere, and their capacity to appreciate dance. Imagine a big group of Han Chinese students standing neatly and squarely in a folk dance class, follow each word their teacher are coaching, and try to imitate movements exactly the same as their teacher is demonstrating, physically and aesthetically. This teaching-learning mode cruelly pushes students into “dance form prison” by telling them what is right and wrong. I was one of those students. As a Han dancer who was born in the eighties, I had lived in a big modern city and had barely visited any remote ethnic regions. I did not get to learn the earlier forms of any Chinese folk dance. Admittedly, my understanding of Chinese folk dance was on the basis of the knowledge that I learned in dance academy years ago. My aesthetic value of dance was deeply influenced by my long term rigid folk dance study environment in many aspects.

The lack of historic, cultural, and religious background in my previous Chinese folk dance study caused an aesthetic tendency when I watched a dance work, that focuses more on the pure demonstration of dancer’s movement than the theme, history, and choreographic thought behind the movement. Neat formation, precise pathways, and clear rhythmic change are the aspects I used to access whether a dance work aesthetically satisfied me or not. Aesthetic satisfaction, in this case, implies how many familiar dance elements I am able to recall from a dance, or how good dancers show their movement according to my knowledge of dance technique and beauty. I remember when I was a junior dance major in Nanjing Normal University in China, I volunteered for the cultural exchange program with the dance

ensemble from The Northeast Illinois University in America. The ensemble was invited to perform a dance showcase in one of the theatres in my university, and that was my first time watching American modern dance performance in a theatre. They performed five pieces and I could hardly appreciate any of them. One of the pieces was a five dancer modern group work, and I thought all the movements in that dance seemed so random and unorganized, since there were so many unfamiliar things going on stage. When they were performing a unison portion, I expected them to do the exact same movement in the same direction, level, tempo, quality, pathway with each other; I was waiting for a moment of excitement for them to show me their fancy level of uniformity. However, they did the opposite. Each dancer performed his/her own version of the same sequence, such as lifting their arms differently from 45 degree to 90 degree which I considered messy. From that showcase, I barely saw anything that connected my aesthetic value and ideology in regard to my previous dance training. That experience was a sort of disappointment of American modern dance and a curiosity to study and observe it as a brand new dance form. It was not until I got to experience the real American modern dance and its education system that I realized how Chinese folk dance training system is rigid. This influenced not only the way I appreciate dance, but also the method I dance and choreograph with.

Touching American Modern Dance

American modern dance was born at the turn of the twentieth century, which rebelled against the aesthetic ideology of classical ballet. Instead of pursuing the rigid and imperialistic nature in ballet, American modern dance advocated the spirit, liberation, and

unstructured movement of human body. As Olga Maynard claimed, “This dance was not created scientifically, like ballet, on the human possibilities of movement in dance.”⁴ In accordance with the harmony of nature and the body, American modern dance is a free dance form which expresses the activity, emotion, and phenomenon of human life. It emphasizes its articulation of spirit, philosophy, and aesthetic value. Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Martha Graham, and Ted Shawn are considered to be the pioneers of modern dance in America. Today, American modern dance has been developed to many systems by different artists. These modern dance systems might have different focuses in mastering a similar movement, yet they all explore human nature, natural human body, as well as the aesthetics and philosophy of human and nature. The leaders of these dance systems include Rudolph Laban, Doris Humphrey, Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown, and Jose Limon.

During my three year professional modern dance training in the United States, I studied the modern dance systems of Rudolph Laban, Trisha Brown, Jose Limon, and other styles that incorporated instructors’ individual concepts in dance. From studying in my university as well as in various dance companies, on both the west coast and the east coast, I noticed how the dance environment and teaching methods in the United States honor individual physical expression, freedom, and autonomous creativity. This is different from the dance educational environment I experienced in mainland China. In dance classes in the United States, the focus of learning one dance system could be different during each class depending on the goal set by the teacher. For example, during my study of Trisha Brown’s dance system, my teacher

⁴ Olga Maynard, “Introduction: A Definition,” *American Modern Dancers the Pioneers*. (Massachusetts, Boston), 5.

dealt a lot with the body weight sensing and the experience of a liquid body in one class. She then shifted to pay attention to the total body connectivity in another. However, no matter how she changed her goal in class, the main aesthetic and ideological value of the dance system she taught was solid and clear under the big picture. The methods of dance teaching in the United States is flexible and various.

I also noticed how in American dance classes, the role of student and teacher are equal. There is no judgment of right or wrong in class, and students are encouraged to develop their own body language based on the movements they learn. Usually in teaching a series of movements, the teacher first demonstrates the phrase several times in order to let students have a basic memory and understanding of it. Then, instead of requiring specific instructions in each movement, the teacher illustrates the essential focus and goal he/she expects students to master, and lets students attempt the move. One interesting thing I noticed in class was that I have barely seen the teacher correcting students by asking them to fulfill movements in a certain direction or a precise gesture. Most of the corrections of movement are conceptual theories, abstract yet specific. For example, one of the sequences I learned in my modern technique class regarding Trisha's dance style involved a lot of quick fall, body roll, and big leap. From the feedback I received from my professor, I did not hear anything regarding the facing of the fall, the rhythm of the roll, or the height of the leap, which I instinctively thought would be the main correction tips. Instead, I was encouraged to sense my authentic body weight, as well as to observe the instinctive inertia of the way I move. In the workshop environment, dance became personal. I increased in confidence, which resulted in a release of

my mind and body. By watching other classmates' dance, I felt the natural energy surge through their body and the instinctive movement reaction from their body parts looked very satisfied. Every movement demonstrated articulate and fluid diversity. These experiences and observations provided me a platform to rethink my understanding and concept of dance, dancing body, and aesthetics in dance. Compared with Chinese folk dance education, the teaching of American modern dance is also precise, not in terms of specific gestures, but connects the ideas, feelings, and concepts of the dance style. Therefore, the tendency of determining the beauty in American modern dance does not equal the success of mastering dance technique by pure imitation, but encompasses the exploration and feeling of an artist's own body based on their acknowledgment and understanding of the move.

My observation of dance choreography in the North America also gave a baptism of new aesthetic values in dance. During the rehearsal process, the choreographer will often design the framework for a piece based on their original idea of a work and teach it to the dancers. After, the choreographer invites the dancers to provide their own interpretation of a particular movement or phrase. The choreographer will often pick the contributions that fit best into their piece and enter into collaboration with their dancers. However, the choreographer does not necessarily have to act like a leader role throughout the rehearsal process. Instead, dancers might lead the choreographer to overthrow the original thought and idea of the dance work. Every dancing body is able to demonstrate different qualities and pathways for the same movement due to the different individual's body structures and feeling of the movement. Due to the different acknowledgment and understanding of the move that dancers convey, the

original version of the movement can be changed over time, or be recreated to a totally different phrase.

The rehearsal strategy can vary depending on the demands of the choreographer. A dancer may not be able to see the steps of the routine until the last several rehearsals. For example, I was involved in a contemporary group dance last year called *Le Jardin de Vingt Garden*. In the beginning of the rehearsal, I found that the way the choreographer designed this piece seemed very random and unorganized, since there were too many given movement materials and none of them were lined up as a portion of the dance. These materials were constantly played by different groups of dancers in different versions. Each version was less concerned with an intentional movement design, but was unconsciously reflected from the alternative moving preferences and pathways from different bodies. For example, “angry feet”—one of the phrases which reoccurred during the rehearsal—was designed to be practiced by different groups of dancers. The choreographer selected three different versions at the end, since they were expressed differently in terms of the space, timing, and movement energy on three of the dancers’ bodies. These three dancers were neither asked to perform in specific versions, nor did they purposely demonstrate the phrase in variation. The pathways and energy they performed were authentic and inherent, which formed the look and beauty of this piece. Another girl and I were invited to perform a duet in unison by dancing the phrase “draw.” Draw is a phrase without much space changing. However, through integrating our own voice into the phrase, we ended up changing it into a space-taking material with the

dynamic bouncing movement qualities. I considered the second version more aesthetically satisfying because it involved my personality, temperament, and movement choice in it.

The overall rehearsal process was full of pieces of the “play” and enjoyment of different dance materials. Not a single movement adjustment was addressed during the rehearsal process. The choreographer only presented the main ideas she expected to see, which engaged the structure of movement accumulation, weight sensing, and circular shaped formation. She did not give detailed requirement in each step. Furthermore, dancers were invited to create their own tones and voice of the idea on the bases of the given structures, called structured improvisation. At times, the dancers make mistakes which the choreographer integrates into routine. No one was able to picture what the whole project would look like on stage until the last week of the rehearsal when the choreographer started to line up material into different dance portions. The final version of this piece theoretically demonstrated a very clear choreographic intention and theme on stage.

Through observing the whole rehearsal process, I found that in most American modern dance, movement is built on top of a theme idea. Theme includes a story, feeling, formation, quality, phenomenon, or relationship. The focus of a theme motivates the soul and spirit of dance, and will provide a wider space and choice for physical engagement in level, direction, time, and facing. On the contrary, there would be less choice to further develop and expand a dance work if one merely focuses on the precision of each step. Through constant practicing, rehearsing, observing, and watching during the creative process, I have gradually integrated

myself into an open-minded dance making environment as a dancer, spectator, and a performing artist.

My study and observation of American modern dance gave me a new entrance to define the precision in dance. Undoubtedly, uniformity could be one type of the beauty in dance. Yet it should not be the only rule in defining the aesthetics of dance. I concluded that in American modern dance education, there is a lot of room for individuality, creativity, innovation, and self-interpretation when it comes to learning and participating in dance. The expectation is still there for the student or professional dancer to master the moves, but the movements are not as rigidly defined as the dance education system in China, and most often, variation in movement is regarded as a positive feature. Different body structures, muscular strengths, and feelings of a dance enable individuals to demonstrate diverse corporeal spirit and consciousness. The aesthetics generated from the variation and dynamics of a dancing body is highly appreciated in American modern dance, which developed and broadened my previous determination of aesthetics in dance.

Chapter Two

A Defining Moment in a Circular Theory

The Circular Theory in Chinese Classical Dance and American Modern Dance

The study of Chinese folk dance and American modern dance influenced my aesthetic values of dance by providing me a brand new entrance to observe the methodology in dance. In addition, my deep exploration of a similar theory which exists in Chinese classical dance and American modern dance methodologically allows me to re-determine my value of aesthetics in dance. Through personal experience of practicing and researching Chinese classical dance and American modern dance, I found a moving principle which more or less exists in both of these two dance styles, which I call a circular theory. Circular Theory is a moving principle, one in which breath and energy keep movement flowing and blending, one into the other, in a similar way through a circular motion. Circularity, in this instance, is less concerned with the actual shape of a circle, than with the cyclical nature of the motion.

Chinese Classical Dance—a further developed and changed product from Chinese Opera—has its own aesthetic and moving principles which deeply relate to Chinese Taoism. Taoism is a philosophical and religious tradition that emphasizes living in harmony with the Tao. “In Chinese, the word Tao means ‘the way,’ simply put, the way is understood to mean the way of nature. Taoists see the cycles of nature and the constant change in the natural world as earthly signs of a great and universal force.”⁵ The way can also be recognized in Chinese philosophies and religions other than Taoism, “In Taoism, however, Tao denotes

⁵ Paula R. Harlz, “The origins and Early History of Taoism,” *Taoism World Religions*. (New York: Facts on File, 2004), 8.

something that is both the source and the driving force behind and support everything that exists.”⁶ Taoists proclaim that everything in the universe goes along with nature, “people cannot see Tao, but they can experience it in the rhythmic cycles of nature: night and day, winter and summer, rain and sun, death and birth. These opposing forces of the natural world express the Chinese concept of Yin and Yang.”⁷ These natural forces further reinforced Taoist philosophy that everything belongs in circulation, as is shown in this classical symbol which consists of a circle divided into two teardrop-shaped halves - one white and the other black. Within each half is contained a smaller circle of the opposite color. The White part represents “Yang,” which means masculine in English, and the black part stands for “Yin,” which relates to the feminine.

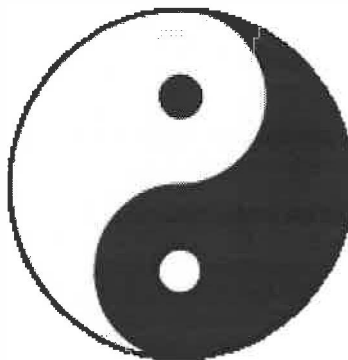


Figure 1: The Yin-Yang Symbol⁸

The curves and circles of the Yin-Yang symbol imply a movement which represents the ways in which Yin and Yang are mutually-arising, interdependent, and continuously transforming,

⁶ Paula R.Harlz, “The origins and Early History of Taoism,” *Taoism World Religions*. (New York: Facts on File, 2004), 8.

⁷ Paula R.Harlz, “The origins and Early History of Taoism,” *Taoism World Religions*. (New York: Facts on File, 2004), 61.

⁸ YuZhou Zhu, “The Yin-Yang Symbol,” digital image, December 3rd 2008. Voice of Long Quan Website, “The Evolution of the Yin-Yang Symbol in Chinese Taoism” <http://longquanzs.org/articledetail.php?id=2695> (accessed September 1st 2013).

one into the other. In this symbol, it looks like the black and white parts are eager to destroy, join in, or melt into each other. However, from the “movement” demonstrated in the symbol, one might get a sense of a never-ending possibility of the movement tendency. All these ideas significantly matter in the formation of the idea of circulation in Taoism.

Under the impact of Taoist culture, the circulation has been gradually considered a core principle in Chinese Classical Dance, “the circling movements of the ritual dances are believed to bring worshipers into harmony with the nature cycles of the universe.”⁹ Although people acknowledge the circular process taking place, no one ever said there is a circular theory in Chinese Classical dance; this is how I perceived and observed on the basis of what I saw and what I read. The definition of the circular theory was explored through my own dance experiences, my understanding of the history of Taoism, as well as by researching other dance scholars’ studies. Xiao Min Pan, the arts faculty from Huzhou Normal University, claimed, “The Chinese classical dance takes ‘course’ as its intrinsic spiritual core, ‘circle’ its movement pattern core and ‘breath’ its inside and outside affective duality.”¹⁰ There is an old and classical saying in Taoism: “If you want to go forward, go backward first; if you want to go to right, go to left first.” This idea has been reflected in Chinese Classical Dance. For example, the circling waist is one of the most frequently performed movements in Chinese classical dance which examines the extremity of the circles one’s waist is able to draw in different planes of motion. When one circles his/her waist in the vertical plane, s/he does over

⁹ Paula R. Harlz, “The origins and Early History of Taoism,” *Taoism World Religions*. (New York: Facts on File, 2004), 109.

¹⁰ Pan Xiao Min, “A Philosophical Thought on the “Shape” of the Chinese Classical Dance,” *Journal of Suzhou University*, May 2008.

or under curves between the left and right side along with his/her frequent breathing. The pathways performed in this movement invisibly shape circularity when the breath performs in and out along with the waist, and obey the moving principle of the circular theory. Therefore, the circular theory does not merely serve as a movement analysis, but represents part of the historical and cultural study of Chinese dance.

Through my personal dance experience in North America, I also saw how circular theory exists in American modern dance, especially in the Laban, Release, and Horton dance systems. Yield, push, under curve, over curve, rotate, melt, all these dance words I frequently heard in and out of classes provided me with a great interest to try to address the circular theory in American modern dance, since these actions take place through the energy of circularity, internally and externally. For example, in the Laban dance system, the skills in yield and push patterns for connecting from the earth into one's core relate to a grounded subconscious. Upper body yield and push pattern, for example, "allows energy to travel backwards through the body connecting arms to scapula and tail."¹¹ However, "lower body yield and push allows energy to travel forward from the balls of feet through the inner core of the torso and out of the top of the head."¹² Therefore, before pushing, one has to yield first. The idea of "yield before pushing" is similar to the Chinese Taoist ideology mentioned before, "moving backward before going forward, and shifting to left before going to right." The example of upper and lower yield and push patterns demonstrate an invisible circular energy

¹¹ Peggy Hackney, "Upper Lower Connectivity." *Making Connections*. (Newark: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1998), 114.

¹² Peggy Hackney, "Upper Lower Connectivity." *Making Connections*. (Newark: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1998), 114.

pathway which relates to the circular theory. Another example is reflected in the weight shifting pattern of under curve and over curve. When shifting one's weight to front, one's pelvis should actively shift forward and transfer his/her weight from one leg to another with deep exhale while dropping the pelvis and performing an under curve through the process. When performing the pelvic backward shift, one's pelvis should, again, actively shift backward and transfer his/her weight from one leg to another with deep inhale while rising the pelvis in releve and perform over curve to the beginning position. Therefore, different patterns provide a similar energy cycle through different body parts.

The acknowledgment of the circular motion in dance has also been explored by other scholars such as the Former Hawkins Company member Renata Celichowska who analogized dancer's central controlled body to spokes which is similar to the ideology of Taoism symbol, "Frequent images for this sense of central include the image of a starfish (the five points being two arms, two legs and the head) or the image of the spokes of a wheel extending from their central hub."¹³ Celichowska claimed one of the most essential moving principles of Hawkins technique is "moving from the center," which implicitly examines the circular motion in different planes of motion which applies to the moving principle of the circular theory. Curves are another moving principle in the Hawkins technique. The movements performed through curves present a similar pathway as the circular motion in Chinese classical dance, which links it to the circular theory. For example, when a dancer performs a straight-legged swing of the leg either to the front, side or back, the distal end of the moving

¹³ Renata Celichowska, "Principles." *The Erick Hawkins Modern Dance Technique*. (New Jersey: Princeton Book Company, 2000), 28.

leg will describe a curve in the air. Celichowska concluded its pathways as, “In a two-dimensional plane these curved pathways can be connected either 1) along an S-shaped path or 2) along a circular or looping path.”¹⁴ Therefore, the curved pathways of the movements flow to obey the idea of circulation. Furthermore, the Hawkins technique also looks for endless possibilities of movement within circular motion. The pathway of movement flow is comprised of a series of loops along which movements can travel virtually endlessly as a result of the potential momentum inherent within its structure. This cyclical motion is similar to the moving pathways in the Laban dance system (see figure). The infinite movement potential described in this figure relates to the “never ending possibility of the movement tendency” I sensed from the symbol of Taoism.

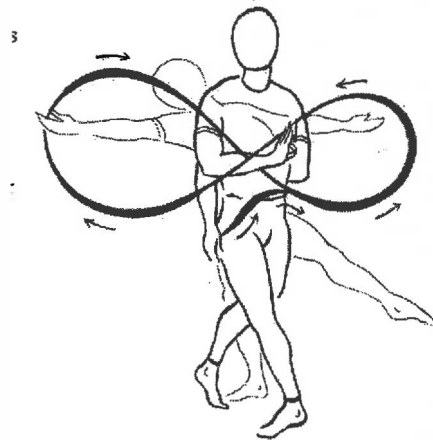


Figure: 2 The Moving Pathways in a Dimension Scale¹⁵

¹⁴ Renata Celichowska, “Principles.” *The Erick Hawkins Modern Dance Technique*. (New Jersey: Princeton Book Company, 2000), 56.

¹⁵ Jean Newlove and John Dalby. *The Moving Pathways in a Dimension Scale*. “The Movement Scales,” *Laban for All*. (London: Nick Hern Books Limited, 2004), 67.

Circular theory, therefore, philosophically and visually presents a similar aesthetic inclination in both Chinese classical dance and American modern dance in which a flowing and drifting motion transmitted up and down, in and out, forward and backward in all dimensions within the inner side of the body. The continuous transmission as well as the curvilinear ongoingness of the inner energy of the body is viewed as more functionally crucial than a stationary gesture. Technically, an absolute immobile movement is not considered to be existent in such cyclical philosophy. Instead, it is aesthetically defined as a comparative inactive posture, since the continuous change and growth of the breath and energy cyclically regenerate and emerge out of one's inner center and successively transmit to the distal end until the next recycle motion occurs. The incessant tracing pattern of the image of the Yin-Yang symbol can be remarked through this process. Contradictory to ballet and some other dance styles; there is less intension in the movement within such a circular pattern. A fluid nature, instead, can be visually and ideologically sensed; for the pathways drew from the continuity of one's internal space do not navigate to a direct place. The movement affinity of multi-focuses vectors the body within the inclination of moving backward before going forward, and shifting to the left before going to the right. For example, in demonstrating a quick forward lunge while vertically circling and extending the arms from the back to the front. In place of literally ceasing the movement in an ending position; one should keep manipulating the moving inclination by perceiving the breath sent from the core of the body to the knees and fingertips, and finish that circular motion in a way which will guide the next movement. Therefore, movement looks vacillated yet constant within a circular motion. The energy generated from the breath through the inner center leads one's

limbs and torso to flow and blend within the range of motion contoured by the cyclical pattern, which forms a particular aesthetics.

Looking At the Differences

Since circularity exists in a similar way in both Chinese classical dance and American modern dance, why do these two types of dance look dramatically different? What formed their unique aesthetics? One factor I found which caused the huge difference between these two types of dance is the different pathways dancers perform within a similar circular motion. For example, head-tail connectivity is one of the fundamental movement patterns in regard to the total body integration in Laban dance system that Peggy Hackney addressed in her book *Making Connections*. When performing a standing head-tail connectivity pattern in one's sagittal plane of motion, one's head and tail should move first, and actively go towards each other. When coming back to the upright position, one's head and tail should, again, move actively and get away from the other. One's trunk looks like a rubber stick that bends in an arc and then back to straight again. However, in Chinese classical dance, when performing the same exercise, one's tail cannot move. One needs to imagine his/her breath initiates from the bottom of the spine which needs to move downward along with the breath first. Then the upper body moves downward. The head will be the last to move which is different from the Laban system. In comparison to the rubber stick image, the Chinese classical model represents a balloon man whose air is let out from the bottom. The different pathways establish two different look and aesthetics of the body, demonstrating how pathways of circulation make a big difference between two types of the dance.

Another important difference between Chinese classical dance and American modern dance can be seen in the different training systems. Flexibility is highly desired and required in Chinese classical dance. Many techniques deal with flexibility. However, flexibility is not the only thing artists pursue in dance. They also look at fluency, lightness, accuracy, and clearness in dance. In Chinese classical dance, a dancer's upper body movement is extended and graceful while the lower body usually interprets lightness and power. Dancers do not play with their real weight against others as well as the floor because they have to hold their weight to perform. American modern dance, on the other hand, sets different rules in dance. Instead of pursuing high flexibility and lightness, they are inclined to honor the freedom and authenticity of the body. For example, American dance artists play a lot with body weight. In American modern dance, one simple movement can be performed using multiple movement qualities, because dance can be not only graceful, extended, soft, but also ugly, dangerous, and violent. I noticed within many American modern dance systems, such as Trisha Brown, Limon, and Release Technique, playing with one's weight is considered an essential dance skill. Dancers use this method to challenge space to take risks as they allow themselves to fall to take them to new places. Both circular moving pathways and training systems have largely contributed in differentiating Chinese classical dance and American modern dance; these differences enable me to have a deeper understanding of these two types of dance from an international point of view.

The circular theory is not merely concerned as a fundamental of movement analysis in Chinese classical dance and American modern dance; it also acts as a platform, helping one

gain comprehensive acknowledgment in viewing dance from a historical and cultural angle. The circular theory is viewed differently in Chinese classical dance and American modern dance due to its relationship to the different histories, aesthetics, and cultural contexts. The fundamentals of Chinese classical dance are instigated, transformed, and varied from Taoist culture. In Chinese classical dance, the movement quality and moving pathway have been historically viewed as an instinctive dance culture. Since Taoism was created one thousand years earlier than Chinese classical dance, Chinese classical dance serves as a physical representation that refined and evolved from Taoist philosophies and principles. Therefore, I view the circular theory as part of Chinese culture due to its deep relation to Taoism. The circular moving pathway is not merely a design in Chinese classical dance; it has transcended the movement, principle, and characteristic that acts as a reflection of Chinese culture. In American modern dance, however, the circular theory is a moving principle, pathway, or concept that reflected the philosophical idea artists have explored. Its relationship with American history and culture is little since it is based on the look of the movement. For example, in the Laban system, its principles aim to explore and reveal general laws of movement by going beyond the surface of physical action. “Laban’s vision penetrated the surface of physical action to reveal general laws of movement. As a consequence, Laban’s work represents one of the few cohesive theories of human movement available to those who wish to study human action in depth.”¹⁶ Laban’s work provides, displays, and presents the complexity and depth of human action through his amalgamation of theories regarding in

¹⁶ 2011 “Motus Humanus moving forward together,” Retrieved from <http://motushumanus.org/about-us/rudolf-laban/>

depth explorations of human movement. Laban crystallized and transformed the intangible into a tangible, palpable, and perceptible categorization in which to analyze, describe, and document movement to further gain a deeper understanding of such an abstract and elusive entity. As Bartenieff notes, “we have no major publication that summarizes insights his into one philosophical-theoretical statement, but we have three crystallizations of his ways of looking at, analyzing, describing and notating movement: (1) space harmony (choreutics), (2) Labanotation/Kinetography, and (3) Effort/Effort notation... The existence of these three systems enables his colleagues and students to study and work with some extremely elusive phenomena in tangible ways.”¹⁷ According to Bartenieff, the principles of American modern dance focus on the laws of physical action or expression, the root of circular theory can be scarcely seen in American culture and history. Therefore, although the circular theory exists in a similar way in both Chinese classical dance and American modern dance, it has not helped develop a resonance between American dance artists and Chinese dance artists while appreciating each other’s dance works. There is still a gap between these two cultures and art forms.

Chinese dance is more rigidly defined as little individuality that developed in relative isolation from other dance forms since Chinese government had closed their society off from the outside world for hundreds of years in the Qing dynasty. Chinese dance is not well known as other dance forms in other countries due to its lack of communication to the world.

Chinese dance viewers grow up with cultural expectations of what the dance form should

¹⁷ 2011 “Motus Humanus moving forward together,” Retrieved from <http://motushumanus.org/about-us/rudolf-laban/>

look like. Chinese classical dance is one of the right forms because that is the way Chinese people dance, which plays a lot with unison. They might question “How else would people dance?” Anything outside that might be wrong, faulty, or incorrect. Similarly, American people, from childhood, are taught to know and understand western dance. It is right because that is what they know. It is right because, as a culture, they say it is. A lot of this is about mindset, how and where a person’s thought patterns were developed. However, Americans thinking are developed within individualistic cultures, ability for free expression, and self-interpretation. American people are rewarded by society for adding their own spin on things.

When Chinese people and American people watch dance performances from each culture, they cannot help to use their own cultural aesthetics to appreciate, comment, or judge the performances. For Chinese dancers, they may see American dance as lacking discipline. For American dancers, they could consider Chinese dance as too formalized. Since American and Chinese viewers are physically, mentally, aesthetically, and psychologically immersed from their domestic cultural background and political climate. This can cause the dance to be culturally and aesthetically distorted by the viewer.

The distortion of one specific cultural dance style, at some point, result from people’s lack of acknowledgment and misunderstanding of the ancestral and cultural background of that dance style. Chinese classical dance can be hardly appreciated by westerners, because they do not have that culture background to appreciate it, and vice versa. No matter if it is Chinese classical dance or folk dance shown in western countries, people call it Chinese

dance. This circumstance commonly exists because westerners cannot differentiate them by the way they look. American's understanding of Chinese classical dance is on the basis of those super flexible legs, circular movements, and colorful costumes—the signs. Although Chinese people admit the existence of these signs in Chinese classical dance, they do not merely view them as signs, but as part of their culture, because they are familiar with the historical background of those signs. For example, the circular movements can easily remind Chinese people of the Taoist culture which proclaims everything in the universe goes along with nature; everything belongs in circulation. Therefore, it is tough to observe the similarities between Chinese classical dance and American modern dance, and combine these two cultures and aesthetics while making dance. Since when one researches cultural fusion, he/she might unconsciously distort either culture. Since one can hardly be hundred percent objective while appreciating another culture due to one's cultural background. Nevertheless, my current research is to narrow the gap between American culture and Chinese culture and build an international bridge to promote the communication between these two cultures and art forms.

Inspiration from a Circular Theory in the Laban Movement Analysis

Through personal experience of practicing and researching Laban Movement Analysis (LMA), I found that the circular theory practically and methodologically applies in Laban Movement Analysis in terms of the articulation of affinities in space and effort, the pathways formed within different scales, as well as the efforts in relation to one's breath.

The five regular Platonic solids that Rudolf Laban considered as possible geographies for the Kinesphere are the tetrahedron, the cube, the octahedron, the icosahedron, and the dodecahedron. Kinesphere refers to the space surrounding one's body that explores the extreme range of motion on the body based on standing on a same position. Rudolf Laban defined that, "Kinesphere is the sphere around the body whose periphery can be reached by easily extended limbs without stepping away from that place which is the point of support when standing on one foot."¹⁸ Laban also calls Platonic solids 'crystals', because the attributes of a transparent crystal enables one to stand inside it and explore one's range of motion within the space. Ideally, the size of each crystal should be in accordance with the Kinesphere of the person who is able to reach all the extremities in the crystal. Three forms of the crystals—the octahedron, the icosahedron, and the cube—are generally applied for capturing characteristics trails in dance and other movement arts. In Laban Movement Analysis, Scale means a natural group of sequences that represent the most widely performed direction, level, dimension within the Kinesphere of the body through human's every day activity. The five movement scales accompanied with the Platonic solids that Rudolf Laban devised are the Dimensional Scale, the Diagonal Scale, the 'A' Scale, the 'B' Scale, and the Primary Scale. All these Scales explore the articulation of human body and nature in the universal order, which is called Space Harmony or Choreutics. They have different pathways since they are surrounded by different platonic solids. I see the circular motion exists in each of these Scales in terms of the pathways formed through different points in the geometry solids, and the initiation and reorganization demonstrated through mover's inner body.

¹⁸ Laban Rudolf, "Principles of Orientation in Space," *Choreutics*. (London: Macdonald and Evans, 1966), 10.

According to Laban, the 'A' Scale is also called "rhythmic circle."¹⁹ It is comprised of transversal pathways which connect the twelve signal points of vertices of the three. These transversals form an integral part of the scaffolding of the icosahedron. Laban invented twenty seven basic symbols of motion which aim to clarify the specific direction and height of movements. An 'A' Scale is composed of twelve directions includes Right High, Back Low, Left Forward Middle, Right Low, Back High, Right Forward Middle, Left Low, Forward High, Back Forward Middle, Left High, Forward Low, and Left Backward Middle. The three possible methods linking each special direction include central, peripheral, and transversal pathway. The pathways in an 'A' Scale are all transversal and they do not pass through its center linking two vertices. According to Laban, an 'A' Scale is a twelve-link mixed ring, which can be divided into four, three-ring pathways. It is easy to notice and trace the different dimensional triangular pathways shaped within the icosahedron which can be cyclically repeated. In an 'A' Scale, except Right Forward/Backward Middle and Left Forward/ Backward Middle, each point meets with another point in the same plane but different levels. The symbol of the middle level direction appears between every two other symbols in different levels, and act as the ending and initiation. The circular motion can be seen much clear through deeply analyzing body initiation and reorganization in each triangular pathways.

In the first half of the 'A' Scale, the forth direction Right Low parallely meets with the first direction Right High in the same plane but different levels. The vertical overlapping of

¹⁹ Carol-Lynne Moore, "Tone, Scale, Interval, and Transposition," *The Harmonic Structure of Movement, Music, and Dance According to Rudolf Laban*. (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009): 223.

the Right High and Right low cyclically forms the pathways of the first four directions in an 'A' Scale as within the routine of Right High, Backward Low, Left Forward Middle, and Right low. The cyclical pathways repeatedly appear throughout a complete 'A' Scale. In watching a dancer's arm during the 'A' Scale, I am able to clearly see the transversal pathways within the dancer's icosahedral Kinesphere, which is called "the sequential circuit."²⁰ However, if I look at the mover's torso in the same movement, I could see he/she successfully tracing a circular motion through the initiation of his/her inner body, which I call the successive circuit. Therefore, when one performs an 'A' scale, the sequential circuit is drawn in his/her external space within the Kinesphere while the successive circuit simultaneously and parallelly appears in his/her internal space. I believe the circular motion exists in a similar way in other Scales.

The performance of the circular motion in the various dimensions provides me with great interest in scientifically exploring the extremity of my personal range of motion within my Kinesphere. It also allows me to challenge and further develop my notion of a circular motion according to my preceding dance training. Through observing and practicing an 'A' Scale, I have noticed that my "personality" in dance totally changed since my Kinesphere has been expanded. If I demonstrate an 'A' Scale with my right arm, the two specific directions that I do not feel comfortable to reach and have barely utilized in dance and choreography before are the Left Backward Middle and Backward Low. This is because I did not get to practice a lot with the two affinities along those two directions which are Enclosing and Retreating.

²⁰ Carol-Lynne Moore, "Tone, Scale, Interval, and Transposition," *The Harmonic Structure of Movement, Music, And Dance According to Rudolf Laban*. (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 133.

Rethinking the range of motion that I used to approach in the study of Chinese dance, I noticed that I paid more attention to their front space than the back space. This is because I felt my body more secure and controllable in that space. However, the movement methodology I learned in Laban Movement Analysis encouraged me to challenge my comfort zone through the attempt to reach to the extremities and expand my Kinesphere, which brought me a different angle and space to perceive movement within and through my body. From an aesthetic point of view, the development of Kinesphere does not merely mean to expand movement for the purpose of visual satisfaction. Instead, it is an on-going consciousness of exploring more choices and possibilities within the body. Furthermore, the study of an 'A' Scale allows me to engage my body more efficiently and dynamically within my Kinesphere. As I change my facing of the movement, I have to quickly deal with the next direction within my on-going icosahedron. The dynamics formulated through the efficient expansion of the Kinesphere, thus, improved the articulation of my body as well as my technique skills.

The circular theory also applies in the articulation of the eight basic movement Efforts embodied within a cube, including Float, Thrust, Glide, Slash, Dab, Wring, Flick, and Press. Each Effort has its own mood or affinity. For example, Floating in Right Forward High encompassing its affinities of lightness, sustainment, and multi-focuses, while Thrusting in Left Backward Low engages heaviness, quickness, and directness. Float and Thrust Effort are able to be demonstrated in any directions with any Effort qualities since lightness, sustainment, and multi-focuses are in a circular motion with heaviness, quickness, and

directness. I also noticed that the physical demonstration of these efforts involved a lot of inner dialogues that circle around and within one's Kinesphere. These dialogues have much to do with breath, which is the most authentic action of the cyclical motion in one's body. For example, inhalation has an affinity for light weight effort and exhalation has an affinity with strong weight. When I inhale I feel my weight goes lighter, and when I exhale I release energy for strong weight. Also, according to Laban Movement Analysis, Weight has affinities for rising and shrinking. When one rises one tends to do so with light Weight Effort and when one falls one tends to do so with strong Weight Effort. The circular motion relates to Weight Effort when the pathways go up and down in coordination with the Weight Effort affinities. The eight efforts can be performed in any order and direction, they can also be phrased. However, no matter how they are performed in variation, their pathways obey the circular motion of inhalation and exhalation, which enhances the articulation of the eight basic efforts.

My exploration of the circular theory in the study of Laban Movement Analysis and its inter-relationship with Effort affinities and the pathways in different Scales has helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the various concepts in Laban Movement Analysis and how they function. I gained more aesthetic acceptance in terms of exploring more possibilities within one simple movement from a performing and choreographic aspect. It also provides me a platform to create a recognition and appreciation of my conscious life from a corporeal aspect. Laban Movement analysis, in turn, has helped me to be more comprehensive and specific in defining the circular theory and to place it into practice. It also gives me ways to

break rules of commonly occurring relationships within movement in other dance types and explore more options for them.

Every human body has instinctive reactions under particular circumstances. For example, when one is unexpectedly attacked by an aggressor, the body reacts with movements with inherent qualities to minimize the damage, such as quick head dodge or subtle arms lifting. Similarly, a dancing body is able to aesthetically react in an instinctive way with particular affinities under the influence of a certain dance style. Arm forward extension, for instance, is in accordance with the affinities of lightness, indirectness, and sustainment in Chinese classical dance as well as ballet. When performing an arm forward extension movement, no matter what movement is designed for the rest of the body, one's upper body would instinctively extend upward along the fluency and tendency of the arms extension in a similar movement quality. Upper body extension, in this case, is the aesthetic reaction of arm extension, since the commonly occurring relationship of these two movements have been historically considered beautiful in Chinese classical dance, which refers to aesthetic satisfaction. However, Laban movement analysis as well as other American modern dance systems challenged such aesthetic value, which inspired me with the idea that multiple movement qualities can be addressed simultaneously in frequent occurring pattern. In the same arm extension pattern, there is greater availability in terms of the design of the upper body as well as the rest of the body. One's upper body can demonstrate diverse movement styles such as a fast twist or a powerful shrink in an opposite direction of the arms with the affinities of quickness, directness, and heaviness. In the meantime, the circular motion is still

shown in the move, but in a different aesthetic and spatial rhythmic form. The diverse options of movement and its accompanied affinities are appreciated in dance and choreography in American and other Western dance culture.

As I have practiced American dance, I have acknowledged that my body has more possibilities in terms of the movement qualities, planes of motion, and expressions. As I learn the difference between the dance styles, it has enabled me to strengthen my own dance vocabulary, personality, and style, as well as the knowledge of observing the multiple meanings and representations within one simple movement. I found through comparing and observing Chinese classical dance and American modern dance that I do not aim to claim that one dance form is better than another, but to combine the different aesthetic pursuits through deeply looking into their theories and incorporate them into my dance and choreography. Furthermore, the exploration of the circular theory has allowed me to re-determine my aesthetic value through my observation of different cultures and has helped form my combined perspectives in dance. I have fostered greater aesthetic respect and appreciation for my movement lives and languages.

My re-determination of the aesthetic value in dance guided by my dance training in the United States provided me with space to rethink my previous dance education in China as well as its rationality and clinicalness. I believe there are more options in terms of the method of educating dance and dance culture.

China honors a long and remarkable history of five thousand years; its cultural and artistic heritage should be carried forward by the later generations. No matter if it comes to

the study of folk dance, classical dance, or other types of Chinese dance, the propagation of the history and culture of dance should thoroughly penetrate into the teaching of movement. The role of teacher and student in a dance environment does not necessarily have to be a stereotypical relationship of depositor and receiver, because a potential hierarchical affiliation might be brought up during the teaching. Instead of putting education on students, teachers have options to introduce the cultural background of the dance style and build dialogues with students. Teachers can then guide students to a direction where it is flexible for each student to create their own interpretations and imaginations of body language. For instance, while coaching Chinese classical dance, a teacher could first explain the origins and development of its circular theme as well as how it represents the aesthetics, philosophy, and culture of this dance form. Meanwhile, the teacher can let students try to perform a certain pattern within a circular motion on their own, in order to encourage them to observe their inner sensations and thinking which culturally and aesthetically refracted from the motion. It is pivotal for teachers to be aware that every student owns the different living experiences, ideologies, body structures, and the instinctive ways their bodies move. Therefore, a more scientific teaching method should be properly applied in dance education in which students should be encouraged to look deeply into the cultural background of the dance form and be creative to explore their body's own features based on the grasp of the fundamental theme of the dance style. Teachers, on the other hand, rather than merely pursuing the uniformity and precision of each dance step, ought to gain more respect and appreciation for the diversification of the movement each individual presents. More possibilities of the development of movement will be automatically emerged from a malleable training mode.

Critical thinking is another essential fact that should be cultivated in the dance education in China. The innovation of a dance system materializes along with the constant challenges and questions of its methodology and aesthetics. Historically, dance has evolved over the years to enable a dance type to be more systematic, which allows dancers more ideas in regard to their creativity towards the human body. In American modern dance, for instance, its stylistic variation has been developed by different dance artists with different research focuses, to form modern dance as a comprehensive dance discipline and system. Likewise, circular motion as well as its aesthetics in Chinese classical dance is also adding to further development and is challenged by different critical thoughts. Through my personal research of the different functions of circularity in Laban Movement Analysis, I am confident to say that there is a lot more to be explored beyond a circular motion. Consequently, Chinese classical dance might be divided into different systems as well, and this idea can be applied to other types of Chinese dance. For example, in studying circular patterns, one can look deeply into its philosophical ideology and explore its moving characteristics and aesthetics beyond the existing knowledge of the dance form.

Overall, my aesthetics in dance have been reformed through systematic dance training in the United States. This new definition, in turn, enabled me to look back to my previous dance experience and redefine my understanding of dance, choreography, dance appreciation, which also tangibly formed a circular motion of my own journey.

Chapter 3

Refracting Aesthetic Value Through *Time Line, Space Point*

Exploring the Range of Movement in a Circular Motion

In order to examine and develop circular theory, the interrelationship between body and space harmony, and my choreographic fusion of American dance culture and Chinese dance culture, resulted in *Time Line, Space Point*. *Time Line, Space Point* is a modern dance work composed of six dancers. The length of this work is seven and half minutes, and it premiered in Dance/Hartwell concert at The College at Brockport, State University of New York. The main choreographic idea of *Time Line, Space Point* is not a simple cultural or aesthetic interpretation of either Chinese Contemporary Dance or American Contemporary Dance. Instead, it is a subjective creation in amalgamating the philosophy, spirit, and aesthetics emerged from a circular theory in both of the dance styles.

There are three parts in *Time Line, Space Point*, and they are separately entitled “Breath,” “Awake,” and “Drift.” “Breath” refers to a cyclical energy transmission through space in this piece, which was inspired by an ocean exploration during scuba diving. My observation of the different jellyfish swimming and breathing underneath the sea provided me with inspiration to imagine the circular motion of those jellyfishes, since their bodies shifted back and forth in a possible extreme range of motion within the water resistance. I came up with an idea of designing movements through arms, hands, and fingers since these body parts have inherent flexible range of motion and mobility, which are able to vividly demonstrate jellyfish’s three-dimensional moving motivation in both an active and a passive way. The hand gesture I utilized at the start of the piece was inspired from one of the most widely used

hand gesture in Chinese classical dance, which is called Lan Hua Zhi, also known as orchid shaped hand. Lan Hua Zhi requires one's middle finger to extend towards the same direction as the palm, while the inner lateral side of the thumb reaches towards the center of the middle finger until they are parallel to each other. Meanwhile, the rest of the fingers should extend toward the opposite direction of the middle finger. This gesture has a similar shape as an orchid. Lan Hua Zhi can be performed by both hands with attaching the wrists together, which looks like an opening orchid. The Lan Hua Zhi hand gesture is well known in Chinese classical and other types of dance in China. However, instead of utilizing exactly the same gesture of Lan Hua Zhi, I developed this gesture by using a natural relaxed finger shape, as well as inviting more than one dancer to start with a phrase.

Breath is pivotal in Chinese classical dance; it should be performed and articulated throughout each movement. Speaking of breath, people usually recall the image of the upper body expanding and sinking since the upper body is commonly considered the body part where actual breathing takes place. However, according to Laban movement analysis as stated previously, emphasizes the exploration of a wider possibility generated from one movement element, which provides me a platform to design a similar breathing element. From this, it is possible to initiate breath from different body parts such as hands and arms. I invited the dancers to stand in a vertical straight line facing to the front and perform breathing with different body parts. One of the dancers initiated the breath from the palm to the fingertips on her left hand. As she inhaled, her hand rose and flowed up, which resembled the image of a person taking a deep breath. Afterwards when she exhaled, her hand released in a

sinking motion downward. The source of energy came from the center of her palm, which directed the circular motion of all aspects of her hand. The whole movement started from the moment she began bending her elbows while horizontally performing the hand breathing movement until she fully extended her left arm. Her palm faced upward and kept moving within a fluid and slow motion throughout the movement. At the beginning, she only revealed the palm of her hand. As she continued, she began to extend her arm gradually, allowing the audience to see a horizontal flow motion. The second dancer started a similar pattern with her right hand facing downward half way through the first dancer's motion. The two dancers' fingertips were facing inwards to each other. When their arms and hands fully attached each other, they started changing their rhythm and movement qualities into a quick and subtle finger interlocking between the spaces of their hands. One of them would give a quick breath hint, and then their hands started to deviate from each other by lifting or dropping their palms in an opposite direction. The second dancer put her palm on top of the first dancer's by sensing the energy pushing the center of her palm from the first dancer, whose arm was on the bottom, mirroring the movement pattern of the second dancer simultaneously. After the fast palm deviation, their hands started opening and the second dancer rotated her wrist by lifting her fingers from a horizontal to a vertical plane, while the first dancer did the same in an opposite direction. Their wrists, again, attached to each other and kept an open hand shape while stepping back until their hands aligned with the shoulders of the other four dancers. Then, they pushed their palms out again until their fingers fully extended and horizontally attached to each other. This sequence is the first interpretation of breath in the "Breath" section of the piece. During the second and third breath sequence, I added more materials

based on the same breathing pattern but used alternative qualities and forms; I developed them with two arms, four arms, and all arms of the six dancers, respectively.

The design of this portion is abstract, for no pure movement requirement was addressed in terms of the precise angle or degree of each hand move. All the tempos are in accordance with dancers' consciousness in regard to their natural breathing rhythms. Dancers make choices picking either quickness or slowness in their hand movements on their own. Their capacity of imaging and demonstrating breathing through the use of the dancers' hands shaped a majority of the motion in part one of *Time Line, Space Point*. I did not give them rigid rules for achieving the neat hands formations, yet the initiation and reorganization of the breathing within a cyclical motion was precise and delicate. In order to get the most authentic feature in breathing, I invited the dancers to imagine the feeling when their hands are pushed by a wave. I also showed them a video of a jellyfish moving in the ocean; let them explore a similar feature between the jellyfish and their palms. Through this process, a resonance generated which determined the center of the palm as the initiation of each breath. It also became easier for them to find the resistance and cyclical energy through movements. In the final version of this portion of the piece, I had my dancers stand in the same straight line formation and behind the second curtain on stage. I used a big black material to cover the dancers' body by attaching it on the edge of the second and third curtains above the dancers' height. I designed the fabric with straight slots cut vertically into it, so that the dancers were able to extend their arms through the fabric.

Surprisingly, the exciting moment I sensed from watching the beginning portion of the dance has little to do with the neat hands formation, orderly gesture shifting, or the flexibility of the finger joints or wrists, which would be appreciated and paid more attention to in most Chinese dance styles. However, I was attracted by the fascinating hand movements in the way which allowed me to perceive the body parts as object as well as its abstract attributes. The strength and motivation of the fingers, therefore, are paid less attention than dancers' understanding and grasp of the theme idea demonstrated through their body, which I consider as part of the technical skill in the creative process. This choreographic strategy reflected my aesthetic shift in dance and choreography that efficiently allowed the dancers to provide more value and diversity in the dance work instead of a rigid structure of movement, teaching and learning. Although the prompt was abstract, my direction was detailed enough to guide the dancers towards the motion I was seeking to animate breath.

The creative process of "Breath" also enabled me to think about the different body parts and movement affinities which might be commonly related in a specific movement pattern. For example, jumping usually evokes thoughts of leg movement with a high height, quick speed, and powerful strength. If one describes a jump pattern in dance, one might instinctively create movements on legs with similar movement qualities that one acknowledges from the jump in conscious life. As a choreographer, I aimed to break the stereotypes in movement in order to present more possibilities within a circular pattern, and this is shown in the "Breath" section. I choreographed a cyclical breathing pattern with arms and hands, which are not commonly considered as directly, connect to a breathing move. This

helped me to look differently into a circular pattern, since the shape, size, range of motion, and flexibility of the hand is different than that of the upper chest. I started the creative process by questioning myself how small or big the circular motion could be, and how many circular patterns the body is able to draw in different dimensions? The agility of the fingers and the cyclical circuits they vividly demonstrated through space provided me with a different aesthetic experience and feeling beyond my previous consciousness in terms of a similar circular pattern that the upper body is able to perform.

The exploration of the initiation of different body parts was also applied during the choreographic process of “Cluster.” “Cluster” is an accumulative formation; the dancers gathered in a small group and connected to each other in different gestures by touching, leaning, or surrounding the person the closest to them. Before shaping a “Cluster,” the dancers were spread out lying on the floor. I had them walk in a circular motion on the floor on the lateral side of either side of their torso with the one hand or elbow supporting their body weight in different timing and facing. One of the dancers started to straighten her arms, using her palm as the center of a circle while circling around her palm until gradually released her hand off the floor and came up to standing. She kept walking in a circular motion towards the right corner of the stage, where the “Cluster” would be formed. At the same time, other dancers started the same movement pattern orderly towards the spot where the first dancer went to. Afterwards the second dancer slowly pushed the first dancer’s knee downward and helped forming the pause position of the first dancer. Meanwhile, the second

dancer started to pause as well. Then the rest of the dancer began to find their own pause moment by making different body connections with the previous set up dancers.

The “Cluster” was shaped with dancers’ different gestures, body levels, and facing in all dimensions. This formation reminded me of the shape of an icosahedron because the edge of the dancers’ arms, knees, heads, thighs, heads, or fingertips looked like the complex lines, and points within an icosahedron. In this asymmetrical corporeal architecture, I designed to explore the most possible utilization of all body parts through space. I invited my dancers to list five body parts that they do not commonly used in dance and choreography. Then I had them to initiate from those body parts one at a time with an opposite effort of what they mostly and instinctively would like to perform. For example, one of the dancers picked elbow as one of her less used body parts. The first time she tried to move her elbow, I saw her simply open her elbow away from her torso. I asked her to try another movement and quality that she could hardly see or relate to her conscious life. Then she shocked me by drawing a quarter of the circle forward in her sagittal plane with her elbow to quickly contract her arm muscles and retrieve her elbow back by finishing the three quarters of the circle. The energy sent from her sharp elbow movement provided me excitement to relate these similar sequential pathways to the sequential circuit Laban invented in the icosahedron. Later on, more subtle movements were created in collaboration with my dancers in the “Cluster.” I gave each of my dancers a specific number in order to provide more clarity when they perform the phrases. They were invited to perform the whole sequence in a superfast rhythm with clear body initiation and pause, which looked like electricity transmitting through their

body, cyclically and artistically. The choreographic process of the “Cluster” enabled me to explore body language beyond the conscious or unconscious body comfort zones. It also allowed me to deeply looking into the human body and further developing a wider range of the functions and efforts of each joints.

Seeing Duet from A, B Scale

According to Carol Lynne Moore, a certified dance scholar of Laban/Bartenieff movement analysis study,

Symmetry operations appear to have played in a role in the development of the B Scale, another transverse twelve-ring that can be thought of as the companion or echo from of the A scale. It is possible that Laban discovered this scale through a compositional exercise in which two dancers face each other and joint right hands. Laban specifies that the hands are to stay jointed all the time. If one dancer leads, swinging the A scale, while the second dancer simply follows, the second dancer will create an ‘echo’ of the inclinations of the A scale.²¹

Therefore, the B scale is the echo of the A scale. For example, the first direction Right Forward High in an A scale would be the first reaching point in a B scale, which is Left Forward High. The choreography of the duet in part 2 “Awake” of *Time Line, Space Point* was inspired by the image of the two sequential circuits simultaneously occurring in the A, B scale. The two sequential circuits can also be seen by the viewer of the circuit if they

²¹ Carol-Lynne Moore, “Tone, Scale, Interval, and Transposition,” *The Harmonic Structure of Movement, Music, And Dance According to Rudolf Laban.* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 224.

vertically view two dancers demonstrating the two scales at the same time, because the two dancers would trace the same routine through space by facing each other.

According to Laban, an A scale has a passive defensive nature while a B scale keeps its active attacking quality, “This association seems to have been based upon his observations of material arts, in which an offensive movement downward and forward is stronger than a defensive movement backward and downward, which places the mover in a more vulnerable position.”²² In order to maintain these two movement natures, the demonstrators should be aware of the parallel spatial sensation between the two bodies when reaching each direction of the A, B scale within an icosahedron.

The circular motion generated by performing the A and B scale is orderly, which allows the dancers to use their arms and focuses to trace the circular pathways within the scales. The circular pathways should be performed in the largest range of motion within one’s kinesphere. A circular motion in Chinese classical dance, however, not only focuses on extending the torso to the edge of one’s kinesphere, but also pays attention to the space around, through, and within one’s different body parts, such as neck, hips, ribs, shoulders, or even armpits.

In order to combine both of these ideas, I invited two of my dancers to hold each other’s hands while facing each other, similar to the standing position while demonstrating the A and B scale. I inspired them to become curious about the space around each other’s body by using my hands circling, swinging, rapping around each of their body while letting them visually

²² Carol-Lynne Moore, “Tone, Scale, Interval, and Transposition,” *The Harmonic Structure of Movement, Music, And Dance According to Rudolf Laban*. (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 225.

sense the spatial pathways. Then I asked them to improvise. The structure of the improvisation was having at least one hand attached to another dancer's hand. From watching their improvisation, I noticed a difference in the dancers' range of circular motion based on whether they held one hand or two. When they hold both hands, the circular motion seemed fast and more attached with their upper body. At the same time, they had to deal with the problem solving since they needed to figure out how to get out of the current circular motion and move onto the next one when both of their arms wrapped around each other's shoulders or chests. When they released one of the hands during a quick turn or leg kicking, the circular motion looked bigger and expanded, since the unattached body parts provided them more flexibility and availability in terms of using space. For example, when the dancers are connected by one hand, the first dancer swung her right leg peripherally in a frontal plane while dropping her upper body downward and performed with a similar circular motion in an opposite direction of her leg. The second dancer supported the first dancer's stability by holding her hand, which was also the initiation of the circular pattern of a horizontal upper body shift that the second dancer performed. The cooperative movement relationship in this duet is similar to the defensive and attacking nature in the simultaneous occurring A, B scale, which I call guiding and following. When the duet took place, the other four dancers spread out on the stage and manipulated their bodies with a similar circular pattern in a super slow motion on different facings and levels. The duet dancers curved around and performed their phrase through the space of the other four dancers.

This section provided the audience a fully three-dimensional image. I visually and methodologically illustrated multiple circular motions performed at the same time through different body parts in all aspects of size, dimension, level, and timing. This idea had been applied throughout *Time Line, Space Point*.

A Fusion of Chinese Classical Dance and American Modern Dance

In addition to the inspiration of Lan Hua Zhi as well as the circular motion commonly used in Chinese classical dance, the fusion of the culture of Chinese classical dance and American modern dance can be seen through other movement patterns and phrases in *Time Line, Space Point*.

“Draw” is a theme phrase in the third section “Drift.” In the phrase “Draw,” I tried different movement elements and affinities from American modern dance. The original version of the phrase “Draw” included many movement elements from Chinese classical dance, such as successive spinal rolls, extended upper body gestures, and fast leg kicking. In order to change the tones of these commonly Chinese movements, I wrote down the directions and movement affinities that would be the least used in Chinese classical dance for each movement. Then I developed the phrase by applying these new elements. In watching my dancers perform this phrase of the new version, I saw a lot of their individualistic interpretations based on their understanding of the phrase. Yet, no matter how they demonstrated in variation, I was still able to sense a core led initiation and aesthetics from Chinese classical dance. The fusion of Chinese classical dance and American modern dance was revealed in “Draw” as well as throughout the piece.

I was able to see a different body language with the quality of both delicacy and freedom in the way the dancers performed in *Time Line, Space Point*. I recalled the Yin Yang pattern in watching the endless energy transmission through the breath and limbs of the dancers. The idea of “moving backward before going forward, and shifting to left before going to right” in Chinese Taoism was reflected in the duet in the section of “Awake,” since the dancers’ torsos shifted back and forth within the diverse circular motion through their internal sensation. Their consciousness of the delicacy of sending energy through their fingertips, chests, as well as hips revealed a Yin quality, which represents the feminine. However, the uneven harmony generated from the heavy effort when they demonstrated the sharp limbs twisting, strong body dropping, and powerful arms recovering exposed a Yang nature, which is masculine.

Culturally, the open-minded creative process of *Time Line, Space Point* showed a combined perspective of both Chinese classical dance and American modern dance forms and ideologies. Circular motion, as a thematic movement principle, was not presented completely in the ways demonstrated in the Chinese dance style in terms of the rhythm, movement pathways, and spatial operation. Instead, it was irrigated by various dance ideas pertaining to one simple movement which is perceived and expressed differently in American modern dance. The collaboration of Chinese classical dance and American modern dance in this artistic project is not designed to distort either of their dance styles, but aimed to find out more permeable qualities in both of the dance forms through the human body. This collaboration allowed me to look more deeply into the different dance cultures in order to gain more insight into how body language formed a relationship within the cultures. The

understanding of the root of the dance style, in turn, has helped me to absorb a comprehensive awareness which has integrated me as an international choreographer and artist.

Aesthetically, I gained awareness in regard to the variability of the way the body moves as well as the angles of witnessing it from creating *Time Line*, *Space Point*. My perspective regarding an ideal dancer's body has also been changed during the process. Flexible legs, long arms, skin torso, and extended upper body, undoubtedly, are some of the aesthetic values in qualifying a desired dancer's body. However, the shape of the body should not be a stereotypical rule in criticizing whether a dancer is technically good or not. An ideal dancer's body is one which is able to demonstrate movement in different qualities, develop the commonly occurring relationship between movement and culture, as well as challenge its comfort moving zones by expanding the kinesphere. As dancers and choreographers, we should continue to be curious about the body and the ways in which it communicates within space and time, as well as how it constantly challenges the way movement was previously demonstrated and perceived. Furthermore, I recognized an aesthetic attribute from watching the delicate and rough movement qualities in this piece. Male and female socially and aesthetically behave differently. However, males instinctively have a female side while females keep a male nature in some ways from their inner side. Exploring the body's language and movement tones from an opposite gender will contribute to expanding the body's personality in dance. Thus, as a dance artist, one should appreciate a moving body from diverse angles, seeking its capacity of demonstrating possibilities rather than "beauty."

Through the creative process of *Time Line, Space Point* in accordance with my knowledge of Chinese classical dance and American modern dance, my understanding and appreciation of body language has been developed. It opened a door for me to research the dynamic motion of both my own and other's bodies from the aspects of Laban dance system. My choreographic experience in the flexible environment of *Time Line, Space Point* cultivated my ability to appreciate dance with diversification. Through creating, teaching, organizing, developing, cutting, deleting, and recreating diverse materials with dancers educated in American culture, I was able to enhance my choreographic abilities. My previous aesthetic value in dance, therefore, has been re-determined through my exploration of the differences and fusions of Chinese dance culture and American dance culture.

List of Illustration

Figure 1: Zhu YuZhou. "The Yin-Yang Symbol." digital image, December 3rd 2008.

Voice of Long Quan Website, "The Evolution of the Yin-Yang Symbol in Chinese Taoism" <http://longquanzs.org/articleDetail.php?id=2695>
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Figure 2: Newlove Jean and Dalby John. The Moving Pathways in a Dimension Scale. "The Movement Scales," *Laban for All*. London: Nick Hern Books Limited, 2004.

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