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## Senior Thesis

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# SECTION TWO



# DANCE DEPARTMENT REFLECTION

REBECCA GREENBAUM

## POSITIVES

- The small community that our dance department has creates a great learning atmosphere. The dancers are able to become really connected and close to one another in a comfortable environment. The department provides a community that is based on trust and devotion, and leaves behind competition and negativity.
- The faculty in the LMU dance department is fantastic! Every faculty member that I have worked with, including full-time and part-time, has gone above and beyond to make my experience at LMU the best it can be.
- LMU offers one of the largest ranges of dance and dance theory classes that I know of. We are given the opportunity and are encouraged to participate in all forms and styles of dancing, as well as required to partake in many academic dance classes. This prepares us for the transition into the real world.
- The dancers are given a choice to participate in many extra-curricular activities. These activities include ACDF, Dance Touring Group, smaller fall and spring concerts, variety of internships, and workshops. This gives the student opportunities to further their development and to raise their commitment level to the department.

## SUGGESTIONS

- As a dance major we are often at school for long periods of time, sometimes up to 12 hours. It would be highly beneficial if we had a place/lounge where we could relax, eat, and do homework on our breaks.
- In order to have a healthy lifestyle it would be nice if the dancers could have access to a microwave and refrigerator.
- As a modern dancer I feel as though we don't have as many class options as the jazz dancers. There should be a way to arrange the class schedule so modern dancers have the option to take more than one advanced level modern class during the semester.
- I would like to see an intensive weekend workshop for the modern dancers. Bringing in choreographers from the Los Angeles area would really help the dancers who want to try and work for a company to see what is out there. We do not have many opportunities to see or be seen by L.A. artists. Also, it would be nice to get the similar perks that the jazz dancers got – cheap head-shots, advice for style, hair and make-up, and other tools for auditioning.
- I think it would be beneficial (for the seniors who are interested) to have the opportunity to take turns assisting beginning level classes. This gives the seniors a chance to develop some teaching techniques and also gives them a chance to be around the freshman, which creates a stronger sense of community and leadership.







# SECTION THREE



Rebecca Greenbaum  
Christine Ye  
Alyssa Eichelberger

## Dance Studies Reflections

### Fundamentals of Dance Composition I & II

- students are engaged to improvise dance movements. While warming up the body the dancers are able to enjoy movement for movements sake while exploring a myriad of other reasons (e.g. working with quality, rhythm, shape, patterns, energizing the body, releasing tensions, making personal /emotional self-discoveries, utilizing a fuller sense of kinesthesia, communicating with a group, and developing performance skills.
- students will compose and perform studies exhibiting fundamental skills necessary for composing solo as well as group studies. Dancers will also use coaching sessions to further explore and extend each study. Students will be asked to generate studies from eclectic sources such as sculptures, haikus, machines, and unconventional music. Through these studies the student will work with negative space/positive space, symmetry/asymmetry, angular, circular, horizontal/vertical, focus, level, capturing the moment, quality, rhythm, play, risk, focus, contrast, intentionality, physicality, and feeling.
- students will also speak, read, and write about dance as well as their dancing experience. Through analyzing their own in addition to other professional work, students will apply the learned elements of dance: space, time, energy, performance, craft to their writing. In doing so the students will become active, attentive, audience members.
- students will also have the unique opportunity to build community. In dancing together, sharing stories and experiences, coaching each other, etc. students will explore each others growth, risk taking, and individual differences/similarities.
- finally more specifically through exploring these movement possibilities, developing an aesthetic vocabulary, knowing the distinctions between awareness, attention, intention, action, and reflection the student will also be able to find connections outside just the realm of dance.

### Styles and Forms

- this course is designed to expose the student to a variety of methods as well as choreographic issues relating to the process of dance composition. Movement studies, much like Fundamentals of Dance Composition, will be utilized to expand choreographic development, increase performance skills, and enhance the ability to discuss these choreographic issues. Studies will be done through several different contexts: space, music, text. Also some research into dance and music history itself will provide a firm basis for the formation of the student's own personal aesthetic.
- the student will receive a thorough review of historical contemporary 20<sup>th</sup> century aesthetics, promote the recognition and development of multiple approaches to dance composition, promote a deeper understanding and implementation of



- Laban's Effort Concepts, gain a comprehension of music and dance related to dance composition, and finally promote the development of the individual student's personal dance aesthetic.
- the content of the course itself will focus on the conceptual (awareness, attention, intention, action/physicalization, and playful improvisation), theoretical (comprehension of defined dance concepts such as Laban), and practical (physical application of the aforementioned through the keeping of a personal journal and discovering the music dance relationship)
  - in focusing on these particular concepts the student will also benefit from selected performance outcomes: investigate in several formats (solo, duet, trio), troubleshooting specific choreographic problems, evaluating others in addition to their own choreographic work, performing an expanded dynamic movement range, and discovering an individual choreographic aesthetic.

### **Laban Movement Analysis**

- Learn the historical and cultural context of Laban Movement Analysis
- Identify several core concepts and principles of Laban Movement Analysis; including body, effort, shape and space
- Demonstrate the ability to embody the movement concepts of Shape and Effort
- Develop the skills to think critically about movement and the many movement possibilities and interpretations
- Develop skills for discovering and articulating personal meaning in movement
- Creating a movement vocabulary that is common to all movement techniques
- Understanding of Body Mind Centering
- Develop the ability to initiate movement from different parts of the body including: breath, bones joints, ligaments, muscles, cells, and fluids

### **Music for Dance/Drumming**

- Complex Rhythm patterns, knowledge of how they fit with other patterns, and how this is useful in dance classes and in our futures as professional dancers/teachers/choreographers
- Recognizing the ways in which music and dance overlap and where there are gaps that need to be filled in order to facilitate effective communication between musicians and dancers
- Basic music theory to help us become more effective dancers and teachers
- Music on the computer to make basic cuts of our own music and create the desired effects for choreographic purposes

### **To Dance is Human**

- Understanding of what is culture, what it means to be a human being, and what is dance and dancing
- Develop and acquire the fundamental skills and vocabulary used when participating in and observance of dance in different cultures
- Investigate how dance can move from one geographic region and historical period to another new era or geographic location
- Study and participate in dances of different American cultures

- Study the art of storytelling and experience and investigate the power of telling a story
- Engage in interdisciplinary study as well as connecting course content and experience with one's own life

### **Dance History**

- Establish an effective vocabulary for discussing and writing about dance
- Describe and explore the hows and whys behind dance as portrayed and viewed in social, political, historical, sexual, gendered, and anthropological contexts
- To place our experience with dance into historical context
- Why and how Western dance is used

### **Kinesiology I and II**

- Action potential and physiology for dance
- Gain knowledge of physiology to assist dance professionals in understand the functions of the body and to be able maintain optimal health
- Deep study of the cell as a building block for all living things
- Study of bone, bone tissue and the skeleton and its bony landmarks
- Understanding of the muscles, muscular system and the organizational levels of the skeletal muscle
- Understanding of basic movement analysis and movement directions of muscles
- Develop knowledge of the heart and circulatory system as well as the nervous system
- Understanding of the essential components for postural alignment analysis and how posture is supported by the respiratory system
- Develop the in depth knowledge of the anatomy and biomechanics of the pelvic floor, foot and ankle, knee, hip and pelvis, spine, sacrum and shoulder girdle
- Develop a basic understanding of nutritional health

### **Principles of Teaching**

- Tools to create an effective teaching plan that is age-appropriate and shows weekly progression
- Injury prevention
- Multiple approaches to teaching to take in to account various ways in which people learn
- Finding value in different types of intelligence
- Use our own learning as a guide to effective teaching reflecting upon
- Understanding the creative process as it relates to dance and its importance in education
- Explore how to teach in a way that is compassionate to all anatomical nuances and promote exercises that stretch and strengthen different people's strengths and weaknesses at the same time
- Dicoverying why we see certain teachers as effective

## **Ballet**

- Establish a solid technical base that is useful in every genre of dance
- Importance of alignment and placement in our effectiveness as technicians
- Applying artistry even when movement is challenging and unnatural
- Muscle control, coordination, and flexibility
- The role of musicality in effect group dancing and explorations of artistry
- Learn to evaluate our own growth and take control of our own learning process
- Effectively communicate personal challenges and strengths and focus energy in the most beneficial way

## **Modern Dance II/III/IV**

- students will learn fundamental movement techniques and the manipulation of essential concepts of time, force, and space. Through improvisation, structured exercises the student will gain a greater sense of body awareness.
- emphasis on energy, range, and expression will be explored. Complex rhythmic patterns and movement designs will be executed. There will also be an introduction to performance technique as well as a continuation of the historical and aesthetic principles of dance.
- advance level of modern dance focuses more on the subtleties of energy, range, and expression. Also with an increased sense of athleticism, style, rhythmic patterns, and movement designs. This course is also designed for the advanced dancer preparing for a professional career. Utilizing the dance technique of Stephanie Gilliland the dancer will explore depth in movement technique, kinesthetic analysis of movement, and a generation of the individual's own artistry. The class work will also have an emphasis on cultivating strength, endurance, range of joint and muscular articulation, and stability/alignment.

## **Commercial Jazz**

- emphasis on study of jazz in a variety of commercial mediums: hip-hop, funk, and other dance used in a mass media context. Focus on preparing the dancer for auditioning and planning for a professional career.
- student will explore fundamentals of technical execution, movement style, performance quality, articulation of movement and musicality.
- students will be challenged to learn at a fast pace executing movement correctly. Performance quality in addition to strength, stamina, and flexibility will be explored.
- through execution of warm-up, progressions, technique, and performance combinations, the student will exhibit these concepts.

## **World Dance**

- Understanding how dance operates in different cultural contexts to increase world understanding and cultural appreciation
- Exploring new ways to move our bodies and apply our minds that will facilitate a greater movement vocabulary and ability to approach learning dance in fresh way
- Discover how different philosophical, cultural, historical contexts affect the approach to dance and how dance is viewed



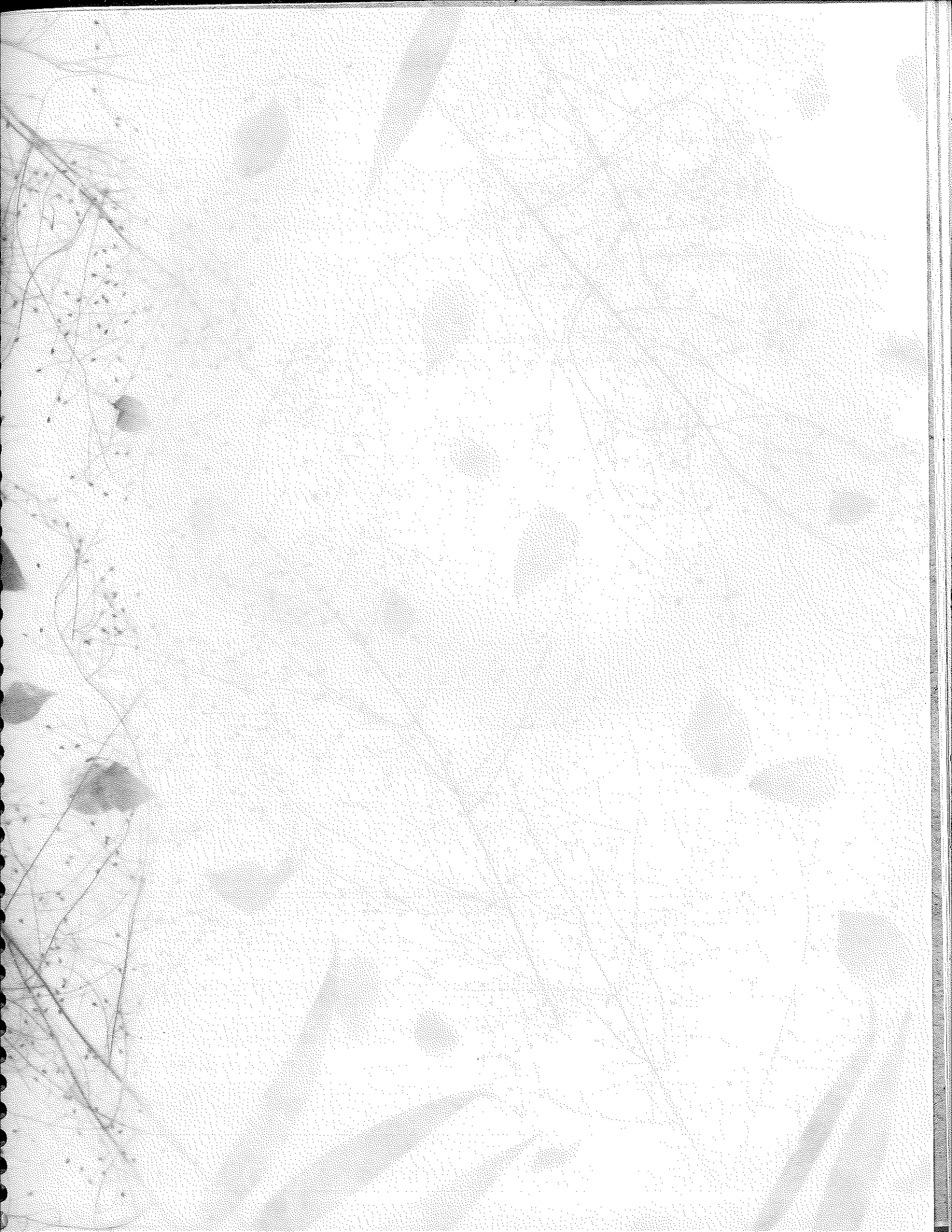
- Uncover the underlying aspect of dance that is universally experienced

### **Yoga for Dancers**

- Build a strong physical practice of asanas, based on the foundational and intermediate series of Astanga Yoga.
- To analyze the benefits of each asana form both a functional and physiological perspective as well as from a personal point of view
- Produce and active person with the sensitivity of their own body's balance and well being
- Develop an autonomous practitioner who can create their own program of conditioning, therapy and rehabilitation through the practice of asana
- Identify philosophical principles of yoga including the Yoga Sutras and the eight limbs of Astanga Yoga

### **Pilates**

- Exercises that have proven effective in preventing injury, rehabilitating from an injury, and in overall body balance
- Strengthening the core to facilitate greater capabilities in the execution of dance skills
- Uncovering our habitual patterns in order to stop these destructive patterns from creating an injury





**SECTION FOUR**



# MY AESTHETIC STATEMENT

REBECCA GREENBAUM

Aesthetic is defined as the philosophy of art and beauty. The only way to really define aesthetics is to develop your own and be able to analyze other people's aesthetics. In order to create my own aesthetic, I began by analyzing certain concepts about movement and myself. First, I started off by reviewing my past and what *aesthetics* means to me. Then moved on to content concepts, Laban concepts, the relationship between music and dance, historical references, and the analyses of dance videos.

Finding my own dance aesthetic is an on going process that I am still going through. It is not something that develops in a semester, a year, or even three years. The process is always changing and it is constantly building and developing. To develop my own personal style, I started by analyzing the different types of aesthetics and dance forms. The five major dance forms are performance, which includes theater dance performance and musical theater performance, social dance, recreational dance, athletic/exercise dance, representational dancing. I found that an athletic/exercise style of dancing is my strongest form. This is because of my background. I did not grow up being a dancer. I trained as a gymnast for a large part of my life, which in high school led me to pursue competitive cheerleading and dance. Also, after high school I trained for a short amount of time for fitness competitions. This extensive background has given me my strength and flexibility, and is why athletic styles of dancing would be my strong suit.

I would then say that social forms of dancing would be next on my list of abilities. I don't know how much skill there is to this particular style of dancing, but it is definitely a form that I enjoy, and have participated in my whole life. Performing is a something that I have been

doing my whole life with gymnastics and competitive cheer/dance, but on stage is a whole different atmosphere. At Loyola Marymount I experienced performing many dance concerts and I loved it. Performing is a huge rush and knowing that you spent such a long period of time working on the piece is a huge accomplishment. I really love to perform other people's work, but when it comes to developing my own aesthetic or performing my own choreography, that is when I start to struggle or question my abilities.

The other two forms of dancing are not really relevant in my life. I haven't participated in any recreational, or representational types of dancing. Therefore these styles of dancing so far don't have any influence on my development of my own aesthetic.

After discovering my different strengths in forms of dancing, I looked at the content concepts. The first concepts that I looked at were awareness, and intention. When I choreograph my own movement I find that I am constantly aware of what I am doing, but I often have no intention behind my movement. When my choreography is done and I am dancing my movement, my awareness continues at a constant pace, and the intentions behind my movement grow. When the choreography is set I can add the full intention behind every single phrase or movement. Each step is intended to show its full range of energy.

The other two content concepts that I analyzed about myself were creativity, and improvisation. Creativity is an ongoing struggle for me. This is one of the hardest obstacles for me to overcome. With my own choreography I never seem to think that my work is ever creative enough. This is why I am still in the process of developing my own aesthetic. I just have to keep telling myself that creativity comes with time and experience. Improvisation for me is something that goes along with creativity. The idea of moving and dancing without any planned vocabulary is something I have a hard time with. Within this study for our class I have

found that improvisation is my key to choreographing. I improv to my music, or to silence, and then eventually put something together. The hard thing for me to do is to realize that everything isn't going to be good, and that everything doesn't need to be used. Improving for me is a great tool in choreographing because I find myself not even counting, or listening to the music as a beat. I am just listening to my body and what feels right with flow of movement or the feel of the music.

In a previous year Loyola Marymount I had the privilege of taking a course on Laban movement analysis. This class changed my whole view on dancing. Not only did I learn about the concepts of weight, time, space, and flow, but I also, learned how to apply these concepts to my dancing and choreography. Any choreography can be completely changed by just changing its energy qualities, or by choosing to initiate from a different body part. Laban concepts have helped me tremendously in my thinking process of dancing. I no longer just *do* dance, now I can *think* it also.

In handout written by Robert Ellis Dunn, I learned about the concepts of music and dance relationships. In this article he advises you to ask yourself these questions: where do you mickey mouse the music, where do you wallpaper it, what changes in the music do you want your dance to relate to, what changes in the dance do you want your music to relate to, and are either in a larger or smaller scale. When choreographing I usually unconsciously ask myself these questions, and find myself having a wide range of answers. I like dances that have a relationship with the music, but I definitely do not think dancing should always go exactly with the music. Dancing as an art should be larger and have more impact than the music, and in turn this will make the music even more powerful. For me the dancing often comes first, I find the movement in my body, and then relate it to the music.



Also in finding my own aesthetic it is almost impossible to avoid analyzing and studying other people's work. I like to explore the ideas of fall and recovery that Humphrey worked with, and the use of contraction and breath that Graham worked with. "The dances that they choreographed exploited gravity instead of attempting ballet's illusion of transcending it. Their rhythms were angular, and jagged" (Banes p4). I don't like to spend too much time in one space or level, and I notice that I really feel comfortable moving in a low level or with a more grounded stance. These are some ideas of modern choreography that have changed since the typical ballet like movements, and I have found myself using them in my own choreography.

"Cunningham claims that 1) any movement can be material for a dance; 2) any procedure can be a vivid compositional method; 3) any part or parts of the body can be used; 4) any space can be danced in; and 5) dancing can be about anything, but is fundamentally and primarily about the human body and its movements, beginning with walking" (Banes p6). I find all of these claims to be true. Cunningham is an amazing choreographer that uses techniques that no one else does. He leaves his choreography up to chance; this adds an element of suspense to his work. "One of his technical advancements is referred to as the five positions of the back: upright, curve, arch, twist and tilt" (Greskovic p73). "He has also eliminated the dependence on music by allowing the dance to coexist with the sound and developed 'chance' choreography which avoids usual or expected movement sequences" (Cunningham p89). I really admire Merce Cunningham and his work. He has created a style of dance and choreography purely his own. Whether I like his choreography or not, is irrelevant, because I find his process amazing and unique.

There are three videos that I can relate to my own aesthetic. Not necessarily the style, but these pieces definitely had some choreographic devices and concepts that I enjoyed. These three

videos are Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*, Paul Taylor's *Esplanade*, and David Gordon's *Chair Dance*. In *Revelations*, I really responded to the fact that there was so much energy in their movement even when the movement was small or sustained. I find it to be a great choreographic device when dancers can express energy in every movement, even facial expressions. The music selection in this piece was very powerful. Ailey's use of the dancing and choreography matched, and even went beyond the power of the music. This is a concept that I like to work with, because the movement should be just as or even more powerful than the music. In *Esplanade*, I responded well to the pedestrian like movements, and the use of high and low levels. In this piece the constant change of directions, playful like movements, and transitions from high to low levels keep the audience interested. Dancing that involves pedestrian vocabulary seems to help the audience relate, which is something that I try to work with in my dancing. David Gordon does something different with his *Chair Dance*. He brings in the element of an everyday object; this concept is interesting to me because, it is also a way to bring dance into the pedestrian world. Taking an inanimate object and making it a partner or performer in the dance adds an element of character. I don't exactly like the piece, but I do like the ideas he was exploring in this piece.

I don't think I am ever going to be done developing my own aesthetic, but I do know that these past three years at Loyola Marymount have helped me to begin the journey. The use of all of these concepts, and the extensive training that I will continue to get throughout my life will help me develop a style of dancing all my own. I know that I will never lose my athletic edge to my dancing, but hopefully in time my love for dancing will grow and I will have a wider range of dance vocabulary. A quote from Merce Cunningham keeps me inspired: "You have to love dancing to stick to it. It gives you nothing back, no manuscripts to store away, no paintings to

show on walls and maybe hang in museums, no poems to be printed and sold, nothing but that single fleeting moment when you feel alive" (Cunningham p90).

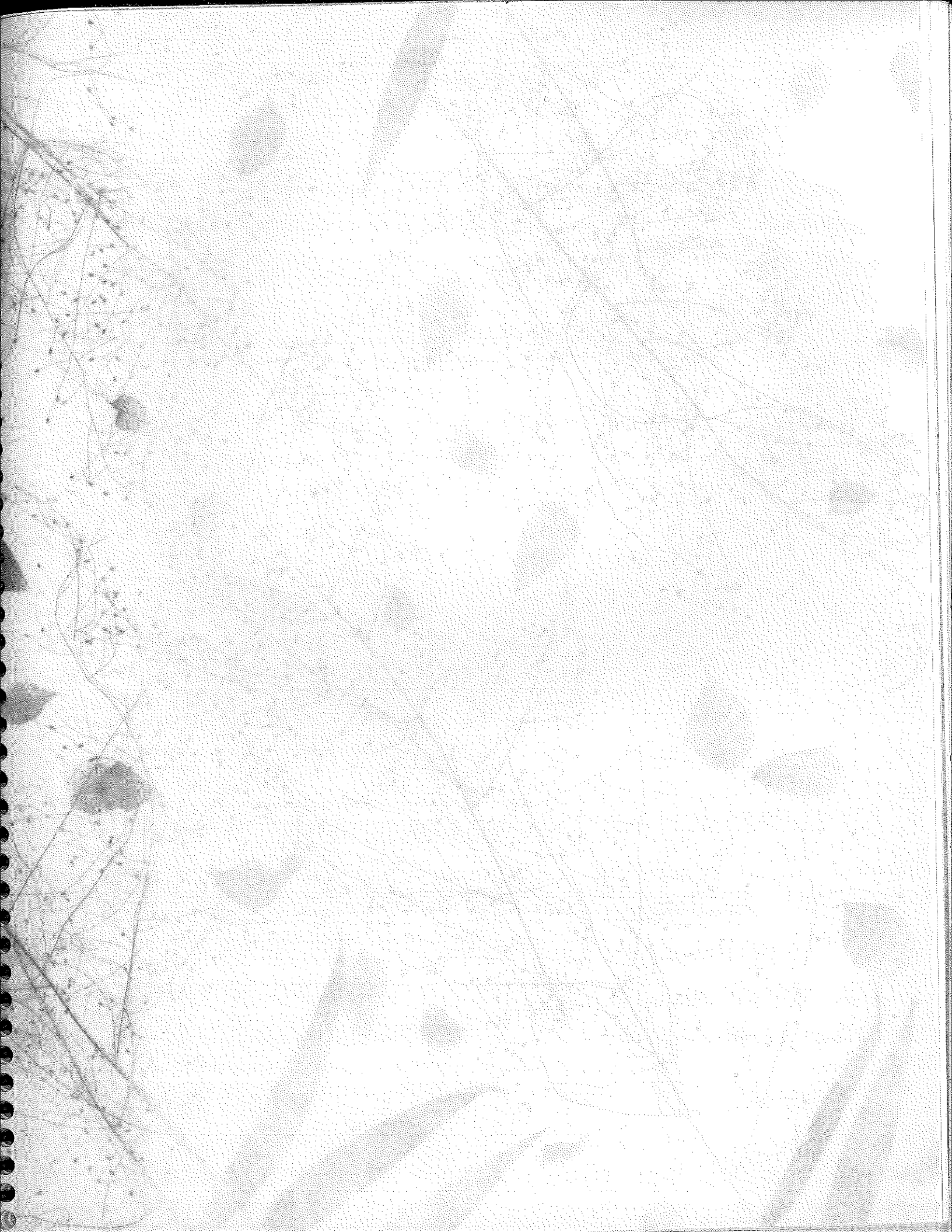


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# SECTION FIVE



## PARTNER AESTHETIC: ALYSSA EICHELBERGER

REBECCA GREENBAUM

In my opinion Alyssa Eichelberger is one of the most talented dancers I have seen come out of Loyola Marymount University. Her attention to detail and impressive technique has proven to be far beyond the average college dancer. Her personal aesthetic is an eclectic fusion of many different dance forms. Her work consists of elements from Lyrical Jazz, contemporary ballet technique, and classical and contemporary modern.

Eichelberger is a well-rounded dancer with the ability to dance in any form. The styles of dancing that she would acknowledge to be her favorites are, in order: Jazz/Lyrical, Ballet and Contemporary Modern, Hip Hop, and Tap. Although she does not regularly practice all styles and forms of dancing, I am confident that she could not only participate, but also excel in any. In addition to advanced technique, Eichelberger has numerous abilities that contribute to her artistic aesthetic. These attributes are: deep understanding of musicality, consistency in her dancing, the capability of being able to blend, and her genuine expression of emotion.

Some of the aspects in performance that Alyssa holds to be valuable are: when a performer uses their focus to completely become a character and the focus stays consistent throughout the piece, the ability to create a theatrical nature without huge facial expressions, and very fluid and grounded movement qualities. The techniques used in dance that she does not exactly relate to are-- post modern work, early contact improvisation pieces, and performance art. To her performance art is not dance-- it is theater. Eichelberger provided an example is this type of work-- a choreographic piece done by Rudy Perez where he spends the entire time on stage sitting and slowly taking one puff of a cigarette. Alyssa believes, and I agree, that this is theater, not dance.

In conclusion Eichelberger's aesthetic pulls from many aspects of dance and is highly eclectic. She appreciates, choreographs, and likes to perform fusion style dancing. Her dreams are to someday work with esteemed choreographers such as, Terry Beeman, and Mia Michaels, and to continue to choreograph her own work. I believe in Alyssa and know that she will continue to dance and create throughout her lifetime.





# SECTION SIX



# Healing with Dance: Through the Approach of Anna Halprin

REBECCA GREENBAUM

Can dance have the power to heal? According to Anna Halprin this is answered with a strong and passionate yes! "When brought forth from inside and forged by the desire to create personal change, dance has the profound power to heal the body, psyche, and soul." Quotes Anna Halprin Ph.D. an acclaimed dancer and the passionate writer of the book *Returning to Health with Dance, Movement and Imagery*. This book explains the approach behind using dance as a healing tool for people with cancer, AIDS, and other life threatening illnesses. The approach of Anna's philosophy of healing includes the experience and integration of four main ideas. These four fundamental ingredients to her process are the understanding of sensations, movement, feelings and emotions, and imagery. These together are the sum of the art: healing with dance, movement and imagery.

Dance is a wondrous art that has many powers. The idea behind Halprin's book is to study and incorporate the power dance has to heal people with illness. "The next frontier (in cancer research) is to begin to explore the impact of expressive arts therapies, especially dance, in the treatment of illness. Dance seems particularly important because it can engage all the arts: movement, drawing, writing, music, and drama. Dance has a highly integrative nature. Exploring this expressive art modality is a beginning step toward reclaiming the healing power of dance. (Halprin, p. 17)" Being a dancer herself Halprin has the knowledge of how magical and healing the experience can be.

During the investigation of dance's artistic way of healing, Halprin found that there were four main elements that complete this approach. "I was able to identify the four components I believe are intrinsic to this approach to movement, and which were included in each session I taught. These are the realms of sensation, movement, feelings/emotions, and imagery. (p. 19)"

Sensations are the study of our senses and how we can respond to them. Movement is the idea of using our bodies to express. Feelings refer to moods and emotions are what reside behind our feelings. Imagery is a tool in the act of visualization. These four components will be discussed in much more detail to come. Though these four ideas seem to be different, they are undividable. "They cannot, in truth, be separated. Movement affects the way we feel; the way we feel affects the way we move. (p. 19)" It is hard to find your self in a bad mood or upset if you are rolling around on the ground kicking your legs, or in a good mood if you crouch in a ball and cross arms tightly. The movement we do constantly affects or is in response to the way we are feeling at the time. This helps to conclude that by dancing or just moving we can change our mood, or mental place.

"A direct type of movement that anyone can do is the basis of this approach. This direct approach to movement enables each person to connect to her own creative experience, rather than trying to imitate someone else's. It is the purpose of this work to integrate physical movement with feelings, emotions, personal images, and spirit. It is, in essence, a holistic approach. (p. 20)" Every person has the capacity to move and therefore dance. Even if a person is incapable of moving their little finger they can still use their mind and imagination as a tool for movement. When you dance it is a personal experience no matter if you are an artist or just a mover. You dance to express, to feel, and this can be healing.

Sensations are the first step in Halprin's approach to healing. She believes in listening to the different senses in your body and allowing them to help guide you through the process. "Dance is a medium of the body and our instrument of expression. (p. 19)" Our body relies on the senses to feel, to inhabit, and to express ourselves. According to Halprin the senses include: sight, taste, sound, touch, smell, motor, and kinesthetic. Listening to your senses and



recognizing the state they are in is the beginning of Anna's process. This is a sort of meditation process. You can start by sitting and closing your eyes. Once you feel relaxed you can begin to recognize the state of your different senses. Are your eyes tightly shut? Are you cold or hot? Is there a distinct smell to the air? By doing these exercises you become more in tune with your body and are prepared to begin to use your body as an instrument of expression.

We all have our own distinct body with it's own sensations and feelings. We can take this body for any kind of test ride that is in reach of our human capabilities. Some of us can even resemble super humans. "Each of us has a unique body; there is not another one like it anywhere in the universe. And this body is intricately designed to survive. It has wisdom, wonder, and magic in it to perform the great dance of life. (p. 21)" People have to capabilities to dance their most marvelous dreams. By using your senses to move deeper into your body you can find these dreams and drag them out through the art of movement expression. Just by leaning back and opening chest and heart you can create a sense of release and joy.

"Be wild, have fun, enjoy your sensations; inhabit your body in all its wonder. This is something children know how to do, and something adults have often forgotten. (p. 23)" Dance is an art that allows you to be a kid again. You can play and be ridiculous if that is the way you are feeling at that moment. You can be free with your senses and experience them to the fullest by expressing them through your movement.

Movement is everywhere. It is like art you can find it in everything. "It is the motion of our cells, the pulse of our blood, and the rhythm of our breath. It is, as well, the ocean waves rising and falling and the alternating patterns of night and day. Movement is life and movement is the source of dance. Any body, no matter how old or young, in whatever physical condition, has the capacity to move, even if it is just your little finger or a movement carried as an image in

your mind's eye. (p. 23)" We all have the capacity to move and movement is a way to capture our sensations and let them fly.

Dancing and moving can be done by anyone. There does not have to be a personal aesthetic behind it. Movement is a form of dancing and dancing is made from movement. We must understand that we can all move and dancing is moving with expression. "Movement can exist in the mind's eye and have a powerful effect. No matter what physical condition a person is in, it is important to remember that there is still a possible connection to movement. (p. 24)" Movement, or whatever connection a person can find to it, is the tool to convey the dance of our body, mind, and spirit.

By linking movement with feelings and emotions one can actually begin to heal. There is an important process between moving and feeling. "This feedback process between movement and feelings is an essential ingredient of expressive movement. When you understand this, movement becomes a vehicle for releasing feelings which are essential in the healing process. Repressed or incongruent emotions shut down the immune system, causing pain and illness. (p. 24)" When your movement or dance reflects your feelings you can express yourself in a healthy and personal way. This can be done with other people or by yourself. By dancing your feelings you are creating an opportunity for yourself to become aware of emotions you may not have even known were there. By doing a dance full of strong and angry movements you can actually release some anger inside yourself. Also, one can try doing simple movements such as skipping or wiggling to initiate a feeling of happiness or silliness inside. "One of the greatest values in working with the feedback process between movement and feeling is that it allows us to explore a wider range of movement qualities. Once we are able to experience an unfamiliar movement, it will often provide us with new emotional experiences. (p. 25)" Someone who is upset or

distressed could try to move in a free flowing or bubbly way to create a happier feeling within. By trying new ideas or experiencing the foreign one can release new emotions therefore understanding the unfamiliar.

“It is not always possible to understand the content of what we feel. where our feelings come from, or how to apply the feelings that arise to our personal lives. In trying to understand the messages our body is giving us, rather than analyzing or interpreting in a cognitive way, participants make drawings of the images in their mind’s eye in response to their movements and feelings. When we draw these images on paper or canvas, they are called visualizations. When we connect these images to our movements and feelings/emotions through dance, I call them Psychokinetic Visualizations. The Psychokinetic Visualization Process has three parts. We go inside to find our personal image, we draw it on a piece of paper, and then we take this image into movement, we ‘dance’ it. (p. 26, 28)”

Using your mind’s eye to create an image of your own feelings is a useful tool in the healing process. The Psychokinetic Visualization Process helps a person to bring their feelings and emotions into movement. Some people have a hard time identifying what they are feeling therefore making it hard to dance their feelings. The option of drawing images of your emotions adds another element to the process of healing with movement. Once you create an image on paper you have a stronger sense of what you are feeling. You can then reflect upon your drawing and begin to dance your feelings.

When we combine these ideas of sensations, movement, feelings/emotions, and imagery we have what it takes to make a dance that heals. By spending time to make these ideas genuine the dance created comes from within and then begins to heal. “When the three levels of awareness unite in our bodies and through movement, we will make dances with the power to heal. These dances will be special because they are uniquely our own. They come from our direct movements, feelings/emotions, and images, and because of this, they are unique and representative of our lives. (p. 28)” When one does their dance that is individually and



distinctly their own it comes from their own emotions and their own illness. This provides a path towards healing.

Dancing can liberate one's self from their illness. "Through an experience of our creativity, we have the opportunity to break the chain of identifying ourselves with our suffering. We are often released from our identification with our suffering by the creative act of a dance which reveals, externalizes, and clarifies our experience for others to witness. (p. 29)" By dancing in front of others one has the capacity to expose themselves instead of always feeling the need to conceal their suffering. Anyone can have this experience. You don't have to be a performer or a dance artist to be healed through movement. "We are all artists by nature and do not need years of specialized training to be dance-artists. We all move, respond, feel, and create. This is the basic belief in this approach to expressive movement: it is inclusive. Everyone can do it. (p. 29)" The amazing thing about this process is it is accessible to anyone and everyone who is willing.

You can always write or speak about how you are feeling, but it is when you dance it that you can truly open up new experiences. "Words label what we already know; expressive movement reveals the unknown. Sensations, emotions, feelings, and images that have been long buried in our bodies are revealed through movement. (p. 30)" Language can only take you so far, the body can express everything in a new way. By dancing one can take risks and reveal who they are without using words or labels.

Sensations, movement, feelings and emotions, and imagery are the ingredients to the healing process. When one in need of healing can honestly go through the process of finding what these ingredients mean to them magic happens. Halprin explains, "Through it all, I have always remembered to return to dance as an affirmation of my will to live. I believe this is the

strongest lesson I have to impart to people who participate in this work: dance and renew your life force. (p. 30)" Dancing is a tool for expression, and expressing yourself is a step towards healing. Sensations can open your mind, movement with emotions can free your body, imagery brings your dreams to life, and dancing, dancing has the power to heal.

## Bibliography

Halprin, Anna. *Returning to Health with Dance, Movement, and Imagery*. Mendocino, CA: LifeRhythm, 2002.







# SECTION SEVEN



**DAYO: DANCE AND YOGA**  
Three Week Unit – two sessions per/week for 50 minutes each

**Movement Style:** DaYo – The linkage of dance and yoga using breath, improvisation, creative dance, basic partnering, and basic yoga postures with a culmination of an in-class performance where students will create their own phrase using improvisation, partnering and at least four of the basic yoga postures taught. DaYo is a form of dancing based on basic yoga posture and concepts to help the student learn to incorporate the benefits of yoga into their dance training.

**Grade:** 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>

**Level:** Intermediate/Advanced class in which students have been involved in more than one dance class in public schools or privately through studio training, and have basic knowledge of proper alignment.

**Main Theme:** How the basic concepts in the yoga practice (linkage of breath, determination and persistence, calming of the mind, and strength with flexibility) can benefit the development of a well-rounded and biomechanical trained dancer/artist through the linkage of breath, dance, yoga, and improv.

**Outcomes:** Students will have a basic understanding of beginning yoga asanas and how to execute them correctly. They will know how to use basic yoga concepts in their dance practice. Students will also create and perform a phrase with improv, basic partnering, and yoga postures.

**Teaching Styles:** Command, Practice, and Guided Discovery styles

**Objectives:**

- Psychomotor*—understanding of how the body works, moving in different levels and planes, and body patterns (breath, Core-distal/spine, Head-Tail, Upper-Lower, Body-Half, Cross-Lateral), and learning to calm and center the mind with breath
- Cognitive*—processing concepts of body intellectually, following discursive assignment instructions, copying new movements taught by teacher, as well as choreographing a comprehensive combination
- Affective*—using the concepts of yoga to center the mind and leave behind negative inner dialogue, dealing with physical sensations of physical pain, emotional security and insecurity of risk-taking, and sensations of stretching and working muscles, as well as taking the emotionality in the artistry of dance to create the combination of a calm psyche and sensation.

**VAPA California Standards:**

**1.0 Artistic Perception**

1.1 physical coordination with movement

- 1.2 memorize works with accuracy
- 1.5 apply dance vocabulary

## **2.0 Creative Expression**

- 2.1 create body of works
- 2.3 design a dance
- 2.4 perform original works
- 2.6 collaborate with peers

## **3.0 Historical and Cultural Context**

- 3.4 various cultures reflect diversity and values

## **5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications**

- 5.2 apply anatomy concepts
- 5.3 dance maintains physical and emotional health

**Concepts and Skills Learned:** Linkage of breath to movement, various yoga asanas, basic dance technique (exercises in turnout and parallel, plies, foot articulation, moving in and out of the floor, etc.), basic partnering, improvisation, and imagery.



**Basic DaYo Instruction**  
**Day 1: Yoga and Breath**

**Theme:** Getting to know yoga and the use of breath.

**Elements:** breath, alignment, and improv

**Goal:** understanding of the importance of yoga and basic knowledge of postures

**Vocabulary:** *Yoga, Asana, Pranayama, Surya Namaskara A & B, Virabhadrasana, Parsvakoasana, Ardha Chandrasana, Eka Pada Rajakapotasana, Hanumanasana, Paschimatanasana, Halasana, Sarvangasana, Purvatanasana, Savasana, OM, and Namaste* (all English nicknames of the postures will be used as well to help facilitate learning). A handout will also be provided with picture and definitions of the postures.

**I. Opening – 5 min.**

- A. Introduce myself and give background of my dance and yoga experience.
- B. Explain the basic concepts of yoga and how it can relate to dance. (3.4)
  1. This will establish my authority as a teacher.
  2. Give handouts of the basic yoga postures covered in the three-week unit

**II. Warm-up – 15 min.**

- A. Use tracks from Ulrich Schnauss, and Aphex Twin.
- B. Begin by getting a partner you feel comfortable with. This exercise is done standing
  1. Establish partner A and B.
  2. Partner A is the giver and B is the receiver.
  3. Partner B closes their eyes and relaxes.
  4. Partner A brushes and taps partner B's body starting at the head, moving down to the feet, and then back up to the head.
  5. Switch roles.
  6. This will wake up the senses and allow the students to get deeply in tune with their bodies.
  7. This will also help the students gain confidence and trust with partners. (2.6)
- C. Walk around the space.
  1. Start by simply walking and progress to a quicker tempo.
  2. Students will respond to verbal cues regarding Space, Effort, and Time.
  3. This is an improvisational tool used to warm up the body and allow creative ideas to flow.
  5. Students will be encouraged to interact and improv with other peers. (2.6)
  4. Creates a sense of community in the classroom.

**III. Yoga Postures and Sun Salutations/Surya Namaskara – 25 min.**

- A. Three *Surya Namaskara A* sequences. (1.5, 1.1)
- B. Three *Surya Namaskara B* sequences, including *Virabhadrasana*.
- C. Sequence with *Parsvakonasana, Ardha Chandrasana, Eka Pada Rajakapotasana,* and *Hanumanasana*.
- D. Sequence with *Paschimatanasana, Halasana, Sarvangasana,* and *Purvatanasana*.
  1. Demonstrate safety, and correct alignment using my body as an example. (5.2)

2. Explain the benefit of all postures and linkage of breath.
3. Students will begin linking the breath with movement.
4. This will teach the dancers to use breath as a tool for dancing.
5. Inhale and exhale should be the same amount of time ranging from five to ten seconds each.
6. No music will be used. Students will need to concentrate on the rhythm of their breath.
7. Use imagery with postures i.e. dog, cobra, sun, earth, warrior

**IV. Cool Down and Introduction to *Pranayama* – 5 min.**

- A. No music – students concentrate on their own breath.
- B. Begin by rolling down through the spine and back up.
- C. In a seated position do pranayama. (5.3, 3.4)
  1. *Kapalabhati* three times
  2. *Ujjayi* Breathing.
    - a. Explain how *pranayama* is used to center and calm the mind.
    - b. Talk briefly about meditation in Eastern culture
- D. *Savasana*.
- E. *OM, Namaste* (3.4)
  1. Homework—using handout review and practice postures. Come up with questions about the body and alignment.
  2. Thank students and clap.

**Basic DaYo Instruction**  
**Day Two: Dancing and Yoga**

**Theme:** Expanding on yoga's ideas and concepts of the use breath to incorporate it into dancing.

**Elements:** breath, basic dance technique (rotation, parallel, pelvis positioning, feet articulation), and Head/Tail, Upper/Lower connections, imagery

**Goal:** Understanding of breath and how it is useful in dance. Explain how inhale can improve expansion and exhale release and rotation. And proper alignment in asanas

**New Vocabulary:** Head/Tail, Upper/Lower, rotation, parallel, core/spine

**I. Opening – 5 min.**

- A. Review homework, and answer questions about alignment

**II. Warm-up – 20 min.**

- A. Use tracks from Kruder and Dorfmeister: The K&D Sessions
- B. Basic movement linked with breath.
  - 1. Use imagery for arm gestures (ex. reaching high to the sun, open chest and let sun kiss your face, root feet deep into the earth...)
- C. Roll down to floor, walk out, lie down and do leg swing/floor exercise. (1.1)
  - 1. Show leg swings in parallel, and turnout
  - 2. Explain connection of head and tail
  - 3. Introduce ideas of core and spine
- D. Plie combination in parallel and turnout (1.1)
- E. Weight shifts in parallel and turnout (1.1)
  - 1. Students can work on beginning to find a relationship between movement and breath (expand and rise on inhale, contract and release on exhale)
  - 2. Understanding of pelvis positioning
- F. Feet articulations—moving into head tail connection and spinal warm up (1.1)

**III. Yoga Postures and Sequences – 15 min.**

- A. One *Surya Namaskara A*, Two *Surya Namaskara B* (1.1) (1.5)
  - 1. Explain Head/Tail and Upper/Lower connection using imagery
- B. Same sequences as previous day (1.2)
  - 1. This will give the student a chance to review ideas and ask questions
- C. Done in silence, students will be paying attention to rhythm of breath

**IV. Cool Down and *Pranayama* – 10 min.**

- A. Done in silence students concentrate on breath
- B. Rolling down the spine to the floor to take a comfortable seated position
  - 1. *Kapalabhati* three times, and *Ujjayi* breathing
- C. *Savasana*
- D. *OM, Namaste*
- E. Thanks students and clap



**Basic DaYo Instruction**  
**Day Three: Yoga and Improvisation**

**Themes:** Begin improving own artistic/creative dance style with the linkage of breath

**Reviewed Elements:** Head/Tail and Upper/Lower connections, Breath

**New Elements:** Basic dance technique, imagery, Sustained/Sudden and Light/Heavy qualities

**Goal:** Students will be able to use their breath to connect and cue their own movement

**New Vocabulary:** sudden/sustained and light/heavy qualities, *Utthita Hasta Padangustasana*

**I. Opening – 1 min.**

- A. Students circle up, make eye contact, and then walk

**II. Warm-up – 25 min.**

- A. Use tracks from KODO
- B. Walking through space
  - 1. Responding to simple cues of direction change and weight shifting
  - 2. This will stir up the energy in the room and quickly warm up the students
- C. Roll down to floor, leg swing combination including core work (1.2)
  - 1. Add more possibilities for advance students
  - 2. Encourage all students to work at their own level and with safety
- D. Basic plie and feet combinations (1.1) (1.5)
  - 1. Preparing the body to move with more fluidity and safety
- E. *Surya Namaskara A & B* (1.5)
- F. Move through previous days yoga sequences with more fluidity (1.2)
  - 1. This allows the student to feel like they are dancing
  - 2. Gives the student a chance to connect breath to more fluid movement

**III. Improvisation – 15 min.**

- A. Use tracks from Benny & Joon Soundtrack, and Ferry Corsten
- B. Locomoting or not locomoting through the space in the room, students will improvise connection of breath (1.1)
  - 1. As a teacher move through the space with the students
  - 2. This will create a less performance-based atmosphere
- C. Students respond to cuing: encourage Light/Heavy, and Sudden/Sustained movement
- D. Encourage students (if comfortable) to move into peer's space and interact (2.6)
  - 1. Students will learn to dance using breath
  - 2. Students are encouraged to use stillness and pathways of yoga postures

**IV. Cool Down and Pranayama -- 10 min.**

- A. Come to a comfortable seated position
  - 1. *Kapalabhati* and *Ujjayi* breathing
- B. *OM, Namaste*
  - 1. Announce final project: With a partner create a duo that consists of at least four yoga postures and improvisation using the connection of breath (2.3)
  - 2. Thank class and clap

**Basic DaYo Instruction**  
**Day Four: Yoga and Partnering**

**Theme:** Beginning partnering exercises

**Elements:** Breath, weight sharing, safety in partnering, contact improv

**Goal:** Students will have an understanding of partnering and weight sharing and how to incorporate it into dance

**New Vocabulary:** Weight sharing, contact improv

**I. Opening -- 2 min.**

A. Reintroduce final project with more clarity

1. Students will create a combination using at least four yoga postures (with correct alignment) and structured improv with some partnering, using different movement qualities and Head/Tail, Upper/Lower connections: done to tracks from Air

**II. Yoga Warm-up -- 10 min.**

A. Use tracks from Zero 7

B. Basic inhalation and exhalation exercises using arms (5.3)

C. Basic spine exercises to warm up core

D. *Surya Namaskara A & B* three times each (1.5)

E. Full yoga sequences from previous classes (1.2)

**III. Center Combination -- 20 min.**

A. Use tracks from Kruder and Dorfmeister: The K&D Sessions

B. Center combination using dance ideas and yoga postures. (1.1, 1.2, 2.1)

1. Postures used: *Parsvakonasana*, *Ardha Chandrasana*, and *Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana*.

C. Dancers will learn how to connect movement with asanas.

D. Students will execute movement with rhythm of breath.

E. Students will also be given the chance to explore connecting with other students during their performance of the combination. Using eye contact and other forms of interaction. (2.6)

**IV. Basic Partnering --15 min.**

A. No music used: students need to pay close attention

B. Discuss safety: appropriate places to place weight, and proper body alignment (5.2)  
This is the perfect place to teach some anatomy: knees and how to protect that hinge structure, low back, how breath and lungs relates to protecting back, and how release of breath, thus renewed flow helps to allow movement to evolve when you feel safe.

C. Three basic exercises to use in partnering: baby carriage, taking weight, eye contact

1. Students will learn how to connect to peers (2.6)

2. Creates unity and community in the class

3. Students will be able to understand how to utilize partners in dance and improv

**V. Closing -- 3 min.**

- A. Inhale & Exhale with arms
- B. Remind students about project, thank them, and clap

**Basic DaYo Instruction**  
**Day Five: Dance/Yoga/Improv/Partnering**

**Theme:** Connecting all previous ideas of dance, yoga, improv, and partnering

**Elements:** Breath, and all previous elements

**Goal:** Students will be prepared to show final project next class

**I. Opening – 2 min.**

- A. Review final project: make sure everyone has a partner and understands objective

**II. Warm-up – 25 min.**

- A. Use tracks from Zero 7 and Aphex Twin
- B. Walking in circle responding to voice cues of movement qualities
- C. Basic dance technique: plies, weight shifting, foot articulation (1.1)
- D. Floor combination: leg swings and core work
- E. *Surya Namaskara A & B* (1.5)
  1. Always concentrating on use of breath

**III. Center Combo -- 10 min.**

- A. Use tracks from Kruder and Dorfmeister: K&D Sessions
- B. Quickly review previous class' center combo and perform in groups (1.2, 2.1, 2.4)

**IV. Practice – 12 min.**

- A. Background music: Air
- B. Review basic safety during partnering (5.2)
- C. Students will practice final project and ask questions (2.3)
- D. Students will incorporate partnering, improv, and four yoga postures with correct alignment
  1. This will give them a chance to work in the studio space
  2. Allows in-class time to finish project
  3. Gives me a chance to see if project objectives are understood
  4. Go around room, observe and give ideas and attention to what I see to support students

**V. Closing – 1 min.**

- A. Inhale and exhale
- B. Thank class and clap



**Basic DaYo Instruction**  
**Day Six: Final Performance**

**Theme:** Performance of learned skills and ideas

**Elements:** Inclusion of all previous elements

**Goal:** Students will perform their projects with clarity and understanding of all concepts

**I. Opening – 1 min.**

- A. Circle up and make eye contact with everyone: send hand squeeze around circle

**II. Warm-up --10 min.**

- A. Use tracks from Ulrich Schnauss, and Aphex Twin.
- B. Get with your partner and do A & B brushing and tapping exercise from first day
  1. This will get students ready to work with partner (2.6)
- C. Walk around in space (1.1)
  1. Respond to cuing of movement qualities
  2. Students are also encouraged to throw in elements of their final project during this improv warm-up.
- D. End warm-up with a quick run through of their projects to increase their confidence for the showings.

**III. Performance – 35 min.**

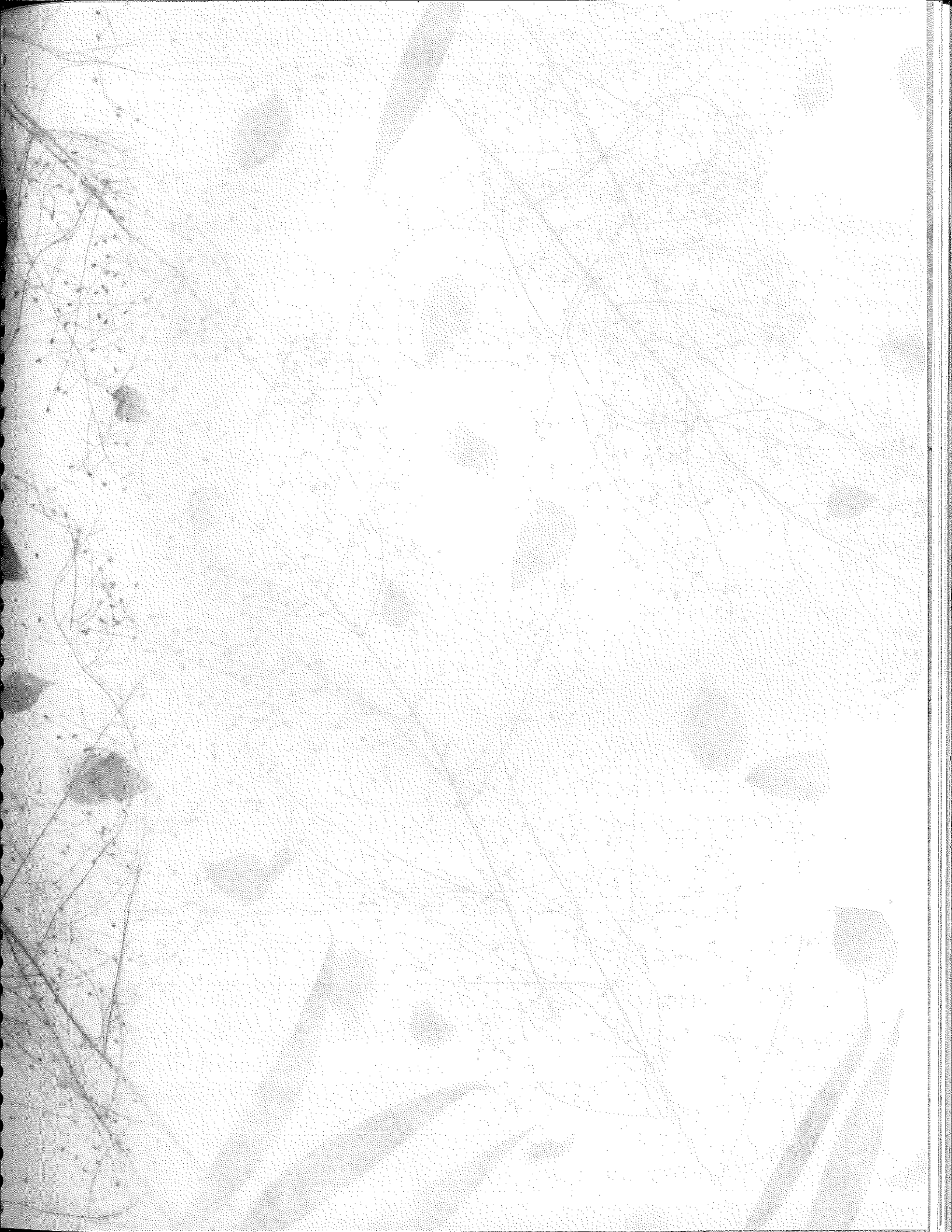
- A. Students will perform final project with partner (2.3, 2.4)
- B. Use track from Air
- C. They will have the chance to do it twice
- D. Ask students to write down what they observe that relate to what they learned as they created.
- E. Afterwards have a discussion without it being a critique and students will all have ideas already written to pull from, making talking much easier for beginners.

**IV. Closing and Ending Remarks – 4 min.**

- A. Short *pranayama*
- B. *OM, Namaste* (3.4)
- C. Congratulate class on a great performance
- D. Thank class for wonderful experience, clap

**\*Assessment of students**– Students will be assessed based upon demonstration of the understanding of concepts learned, class attendance, in-class attitude, work ethic, participation level, final project, and growth.

Also-- Assess DaYo as a type of technique, evaluate how well I think it is supporting and beneficial to the dancer and technique.





# SECTION EIGHT



# THE TREE OF YOGA

REBECCA GREENBAUM

B.K.S. Iyengar is a prominent practitioner of yoga throughout the world. He is one of the first men to teach yoga in the West and is highly respected for his teachings. In his book, *The Tree of Yoga*, he describes yoga as a state of happiness where one is free from all of the distractions of the mind. "By culturing the body, the mind and the consciousness, the practitioner conquers the defects of the intellect, brings balance to the emotional seat of the heart, and becomes intuitively strong. Yoga leads to that happiness where one is free from the defects of intelligence, emotions and instincts. The different texts, which speak of yoga, lay emphasis on different aspects, but all are speaking of the same process of spiritual development."<sup>1</sup>

Yoga has been defined in many ways: a path, union, change, liberation, religion, philosophy, exercise, meditation, process, deliverance, reformative, curative, wellness, discipline, intense concentration, practiced postures, controlled breathing and so on. It is hard to give a word like *Yoga* a complete definition that encompasses everything it stands for. It is similar to the word *love* or *peace*. You cannot describe it with a short definition. Not only do you need to live through it to understand it, but you also need to appreciate it.

There are so many physical, mental and spiritual aspects of yoga that are beneficial for human beings. "Yoga is meant for individual growth and for physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual defects to be removed. It is designed for the removal of fluctuations and afflictions, pains and sorrows. Do these afflictions vary from one culture to another? Are they in society or in the individual?"<sup>2</sup> In this quote Iyengar is explaining how yoga is universal, and how people of all cultures can benefit from its magic. These afflictions that he speaks of are consistent in all

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<sup>1</sup> Iyengar, B.K.S. *The Tree of Yoga*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 1988. 15

<sup>2</sup> Iyengar. 14



people, and yoga is common throughout the world. Therefore, we are all subject for its removal of afflictions.

I would like to discuss two of the most beneficial parts of yoga, which include the breath/pranayama, and meditation. I believe strongly that the use of breath linked with movement is the most valuable aspect of yoga -- especially for me as a dancer. Iyengar states: "If you look at breath in the form of the respiratory system, it is physical. But when the action of the breath on the mind is studied and understood, it becomes spiritual. Pranayama is the bridge between the physical and the spiritual. Hence pranayama is the hub of yoga."<sup>3</sup>

*Pranayama* is the Sanskrit word for the use of breath. The idea of using the breath to expand on the inhale and release on the exhale is extremely beneficial in connecting the movement. Iyengar says, "When we are performing an asana, we can only extend the body fully if we synchronize the breath with the movement. *Prana* is energy. *Ayama* is creation, distribution, and maintenance. Pranayama is the science of breath, which leads to the creation, distribution and maintenance of vital energy."<sup>4</sup> By concentrating of your breath during yoga not only are you becoming more aware of your body, but you are also quieting the mind. This quieting of the mind allows for optimal clarification of the consciousness.

Pranayama is also used as a type of meditation in the yoga practice. Meditation allows for the practitioner to be present in himself or herself, and to avoid glitches of the mind. "In meditation," says Iyengar, "the person who has mature intelligence lives in the moment and will not be caught in the movement of the moments. The practitioner cultures his mind, his intelligence and his consciousness to live in the moment, and as each moment moves on to the

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<sup>3</sup> 60

<sup>4</sup> 57

next, he goes with the moment but not with the movement. That is meditation.”<sup>5</sup> Pranayama and meditation are integrated throughout the yoga practice, but can also be done as simple exercises following a class, or at home. A simple exercise one can do to use pranayama for mediation can be to sit in a comfortable seated position with the spine erect. Then simply close the eyes and concentrate on the inhale and exhale of the breath. For a beginner the inhale can be around five seconds, then hold it in for five seconds, then exhale. The exhale should range from five to ten seconds, then the breath is held again before continuing into the next cycle. In time the practitioner will gain longer inhales and exhales with retentions. Says Iyengar, “Meditation is not something that can be expressed in words. It must be experienced in one’s life.”<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the concepts behind the practice of yoga that Iyengar discusses in his book, *The Tree of Yoga*, he also covers the role of the teacher, and the expectations of the West. He explains -- “It is not a question of East and West; it’s a question of the spiritual level on which you wish to work.”<sup>7</sup> Iyengar's point is well taken. The difference is not between the East and the West; the difference lies in the individual and their level of commitment to the practice. In the West I believe we are often confronted with people who are interested in only the physical aspects of yoga. I would like to see teachers and yoga studios in the West incorporate more philosophical ideas into their classes.

B.K.S. Iyengar explains further how the yoga practice is by no means only for the Hindu culture. “No where in the ancient texts is it said that yoga is only to be practiced by the Hindus. On the contrary, Patanjali describes yoga as ‘*sarvabhauma*’. ‘*Bhauma*’ means the world; ‘*sarva*’ means all. Yoga is a universal culture.”<sup>8</sup> Yoga is not intended only for the Hindu culture, it is

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<sup>5</sup> 147

<sup>6</sup> 138

<sup>7</sup> 14

<sup>8</sup> 13

for the entire human race and anyone can become a practitioner. The problem arises when a culture takes up the practice of yoga and either belittles it by teaching only certain parts of the philosophy and/or by turning it into something it was never meant to be.

Western cultures are often concerned only with the act of completing the postures (asanas). Iyengar laments this, "In the West this practice (asana) is too often considered to be only physical."<sup>9</sup> By practicing the asanas, which is the third step in the eight limbs of yoga practice, you are actually practicing all limbs. However, an untrained or uninformed yogi may not know or recognize these different lessons without being taught them from the beginning. The lessons of the eight limbs include the *yamas* and *niyamas* (which are the dos and don't or the Ten Commandments in yoga), *asana* (postures), *pranayama* (control of the breath), *pratyahara* (detachment), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation), and *samadhi* (the ultimate state).

I have experienced various yoga teachers who are well-informed on the many aspects of yoga. Yet, there are also some uneducated *gurus* in the West. Iyengar shares this concern: "Teachers must always be learning. They will learn from their pupils and must have the humility to tell them that they are still learning their art."<sup>10</sup> There is a plethora of information that yoga has to offer and it would be an ultimate conceit for one to assume to know it all. Yoga is a life-long practice whether the practitioner is a student or teacher. The practice is never perfected, rather it is always changing.

In addition to the philosophical side of yoga, a good yoga teacher knows the biomechanics of the body and can accurately use this knowledge to help their students. By understanding the body, the teacher can then begin to explain the asanas and their respective benefits. According to Iyengar, "Yoga teachers have to know the entire functioning of the body;

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<sup>9</sup> 46

<sup>10</sup> 159

they have to know the behavior of the people who come to them and how to react and be ready to help, to protect and safeguard their pupils.”<sup>11</sup>

In the West one can get a “certification” to teach yoga in as little as a three-week course. It is obvious that one cannot learn all there is to know about the physical and mental aspects of yoga in three weeks. “It is indeed unfortunate that people take courses for a short while, then proclaim themselves to be yoga teachers. God alone knows how much experience they have or what is the quality of their work,” warns Iyengar. “People who go to them are also responsible because they do not put pressure on the teacher to find out whether the teacher has knowledge or not.”<sup>12</sup> Iyengar adds, “There is a two way avenue between pupil and teacher involving love, admirations, devotion and dedication.”<sup>13</sup> The teacher is responsible for their students and the student should be holding the teacher in the highest regards.

B.K.S. Iyengar is a phenomenal and profound guru. He has become a household name and a legend in the yoga community. He has written countless books and created his own unique approach to yoga -- now commonly know as Iyengar yoga. I hold his teachings close to my heart and have gained an abundance of knowledge from his book, *The Tree of Yoga*. I conclude with a quote -- “Yoga is one as the world is one and the people of the world are one.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 159

<sup>12</sup> 160

<sup>13</sup> 160

<sup>14</sup> 15







# SECTION NINE



# YOGA FOR THE THREE STAGES OF LIFE

REBECCA GREENBAUM

Srivatsa Ramaswami is a renowned yogi and guru. He studied yoga for thirty-three years under the legendary T. Krishnamacarya, who has been the most influential figure in yoga over the past one hundred years. T. Krishnamacarya was also the teacher of many other successful gurus such as, B.K.S. Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois, and T.K.V. Desikachar. Since his studies with Krishnamacarya, Ramaswami has developed program for making yoga more a *way of life*, rather than simply a *practice*. He teaches many Vinyasa Krama certification courses all over the world. I was fortunate enough to be able to work with him this past fall and, with his assistance, gain my certification. In his book, *Yoga for the Three Stages of Life*, he presents a phenomenal amount of information on how to make yoga a lifetime devotion. His book includes principles on moral choices in life, yoga postures, breathing exercises, mediation practices, and mental disciplines.<sup>1</sup>

Srivatsa Ramaswami's book also includes sections on both yoga theory and the postures. He provides extensive insight into the background and beginnings of yoga, as well as the disciplines and philosophical aspects. After his account of the importance of the practice and discipline, he goes into extreme detail on all the different postures. He takes the reader through a step-by-step process of getting in and out of the many postures, and also how to incorporate the breath and meditation. These are also the concepts that he includes and stresses in his Vinyasa Krama certification course.

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<sup>1</sup> Ramaswami, Srivatsa. *Yoga for The Three Stages of Life: Developing Your Practice As an Art Form, a Physical Therapy, and a Guiding Philosophy*. Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2000. Back cover.

A key aspect of yoga discussed in *Yoga for the Three Stages of Life* is the “dos” and “don’ts”, also known as the Ten Commandments in yoga. “The don’ts (*yamas*) are don’t harm (*ahimsa*), don’t lie (*satya*), don’t steal (*asteya*), don’t philander (*brahmacarya*), and don’t accumulate (wealth) (*aparigraha*). The dos (*niyamas*) are keep clean (*sauca*), develop contentment (*samtosha*), practice austerity (*tapas*), study the scriptures (*svadhyaya*), and surrender to the Lord (*Isvarapranidhana*).”<sup>2</sup> Ramaswami describes these yamas and niyamas as the first steps in the journey in becoming a yogi. These initial “commandments” are to be established and integrated before the practice of the postures and breathing can even be effective.

Throughout his book, Ramaswami discusses the importance of the use of the breath. He explains how shortness of breath is associated with a fragmented mind, and that the effort of proper breathing (*prayatna*) is vital. According to his teacher, during the practice of asanas, the breath should be smooth; therefore it is mandatory to stop the practice when the breath is not smooth.<sup>3</sup> Later on in the book, he discusses the four aspects of yogic breathing. “The first is *recaka*, or long and smooth exhalation. The second is *puraka*, or long inhalation. It is, however, possible to hold in the breath after inhalation, which is known as internal holding, or *antah-kumbhaka* -- the third aspect. Holding the breath out during the time interval between the completion of exhalation (*racka*) and the beginning of inhalation (*puraka*) is *bahya-kumbhaka*, the fourth aspect.”<sup>4</sup> This is a form of Ujjayi breathing/pranayama that we learned in the certification course. It is a good way to begin meditation and also to clear the mind.

Almost half of Srivatsa Ramaswami’s book consists of the deep analysis and description of the different postures/asanas. He states: “Asana practice directly helps to improve one’s health and flexibility. Asanas can be broadly classified into standing, sitting, supine, prone,

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<sup>2</sup> Ramaswami. 87

<sup>3</sup> 96

<sup>4</sup> 126



balancing, and inverted.”<sup>5</sup> According to Ramaswami, the number of postures is unknown. When I trained under him we learned an astounding seven hundred postures in one month. He explains, “Any practice should be done with preparation, progression, and variation of postures (*vinayasa*), as well, as corresponding synchronous, conscious, and counter movements (*pratikriyas*) that employ the bandhas and mudras at the appropriate stages.”<sup>6</sup>

*Yoga for the Three Stages of Life* is filled with an abundance of knowledge. To summarize is to do an injustice to this profound work. I would recommend a complete reading of the book to anyone interested in learning more about yoga, its beginnings, and philosophy. The foundation of Ramaswami’s teaching is the focus of adjusting yoga to the individual needs and stages in one’s life. He believes that everyone can benefit from yoga, and that the practice can be varied for all different situations in life. I believe Srivatsa Ramaswami’s approach to be one of the best and most developed forms of yoga. “Since it's nature’s law to change, constancy alone is strange. There are sixty-four arts. Yoga is one of them.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 99

<sup>6</sup> 99

<sup>7</sup> 62, 94





# SECTION TEN



# 20 ASANAS FROM VINYASA KRAMA

REBECCA GREENBAUM

- **Samasthiti**



**POSTURE/TECHNIQUE:** Standing in Samasthiti the chin is kept tucked and the eyes looking down. Feet are to be kept rooted into the earth by pressing firmly into the ground with the entire foot. The feet are side-by-side heels and ankles together. There is to be equal balance on both feet, and no leaning from side to side. The kneecaps should be pulled up by engaging the quadriceps muscles; this prevents the option of hyper-extending the knees. In this posture you can practice deep long inhalations and exhalations to improve the cycle of the ujjayi pranayama.

**BENEFITS:** “Samasthiti corrects bad posture by strengthening the spine, improves the alignment of the body, and counters the degenerative effects of ageing on the spine legs and feet.”<sup>1</sup>

**MY EXPERIENCE:** This posture is a simple posture for me. I find the most beneficial part of practicing this posture to be the ability to practice concentrating on my breath. I find myself able to keep my mind focused on my breath and to keep my breath at a slow inhale and exhale rate.

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<sup>1</sup> Iyengar, B.K.S. *Yoga: The Path to Holistic Health*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2001. 49.



## • Uttanasana



POSTURE/TECHNIQUE: From Samasthiti inhale and stretch the arms overhead interlocking fingers. Stretch the sides of body as much as it can and then exhale and fold the body forward all the way over until the hands reach to the floor. In this posture keep the chin tucked letting the head hang. Do not raise the head. Place the hands on the floor right beside the feet. In this forward folding posture keep the kneecaps pulled up and the quadriceps engaged. Lift the low abdominal muscles up in order to make space for the forward bend. Let the hips rotate forward in the socket allowing for a deep stretch in the hamstring muscles. This is Uttanasana. Hold here for three deep inhalations and exhalations. To exit this posture inhale, stretching the arms over the head and interlock the fingers while arching the back slightly to come up to standing. Then exhale and lower the arms.

BENEFITS: "Uttanasana relieves physical and mental exhaustion, slows down the heartbeat, and tones the liver, spleen, and kidneys. The posture also relieves stomach aches, and reduces abdominal and back pain during menstruation."<sup>2</sup>

MY EXPERIENCE: This posture always feels great on my body. I like the way it gives a feeling of release in my back. I feel comfortable in this posture. It is a good way to stretch both of my hamstring muscles at the same time. The rotation of my pelvis allows for the deepest stretch that I can get. My breathing can usually stay clam and slow in this posture.

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<sup>2</sup> Iyengar, 73.

## • Ardha Utkatasana



**POSTURE/TECHNIQUE:** From Samasthiti, inhale and stretch your arms overhead interlocking your fingers. From there slowly exhale and lower to a squatted position. The exhale should be as long and smooth as possible to support the diaphragm. Keep the knees, ankles and heels aligned at a 90-degree or lower angle. The pelvis should not be tucked, and there should be no crunching in the low back. The chest should be up and the chin down for optimal balance. The knees should be horizontal in order to avoid strain in the knees. This is Ardha Utkatasana. Stay in the posture for three long breaths. If the posture cannot be completed, raise the heels or use a partner for help. Do not compromise; the very last option is to separate your feet slightly. To exit the posture, inhale and stretch your legs to standing, then exhale and lower your arms.

**BENEFIT:** "In Ardha Utkatasana the diaphragm is lifted up and this gives a gentle massage to the heart. The abdominal organs and the back are toned, the chest is developed by being fully expanded, and it corrects any minor deformities in the legs. It is a beneficial pose for horsemen."<sup>3</sup>

**MY EXPERIENCE:** Surprisingly, this posture is one of my favorites. I have flexible hip-flexors therefore being in a squatted position is not strenuous on my body. This is a great posture for me to work on strengthening my gluteus and hamstring muscles.

<sup>3</sup> Iyengar, B.K.S. *Light on Yoga*. New York: Schocken Books. 1966. 89.



## • Adho Mukha Svanasana



**POSTURE/TECHNIQUE:** From Samasthiti, inhale and stretch the arms over head and interlock fingers. Slowly exhale and lower into Uttanasana. Inhale and walk the hands out about three feet away from your planted feet. Push strongly and equally into the whole surface of the hands and feet. The shoulders should not rise up to the ears and the armpits should spin inward towards the chest. Do not collapse the ribcage, but keep the abdominal muscles wide and engaged. Tip the pelvis up to get optimal stretch of the hamstring muscles, but do not crunch the low back. Inflate the low back (kidney area) to avoid strain. Engage the inner thigh muscles and think about the shins coming inward while the thighs push outward while keeping your feet grounded, this will create a sturdy posture. This is Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog). This posture is great for working on lengthening the inhale and exhale. Hold the posture and complete three long inhalations and exhalations. The asana creates a deep hamstring and calves stretch, and is good for alignment. To exit of this posture inhale, rise to the toes and either walk or slightly jump the feet back to Uttanasana. Staying in Uttanasana exhale, then inhale stretching the arms over the head and interlock the fingers while arching the back slightly to come up to standing. Then exhale and lower the arms.

**BENEFIT:** “Adho Mukha Svanasana calms the brain and gently stimulates the nervous system. This posture slows down the heartbeat, and relieves pain in the heels and softens calcaneal spurs. It also checks heavy menstrual flow and helps to prevent hot flashes during menopause.”<sup>4</sup>

**MY EXPERIENCE:** Adho Mukha Svanasana is a great posture. I find myself always in the asana even if I am not in a yoga setting. This posture has always helped me to find good alignment and gives me a deep stretch in my hamstring and calve muscles. This is also one of the most beneficial postures for me when I am concentrating on my breath.

<sup>4</sup> Iyengar, B.K.S. *Yoga: The Path to Holistic Health*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2001. 69.

## • Urdhva Mukha Svanasana



**POSTURE/TECHNIQUE:** From Samasthiti, inhale and raise the arms over head interlocking fingers. Slowly exhale and move in to Uttanasana. Take an inhale while in Uttanasana. From Uttanasana, exhale and hold it, lift up on the toes, press firmly into the ground, bend the knees and jump back to plank (push-up) position. Also known as Caturanga Dandasana. From here inhale and lower the body two inches from the floor, push and swing the body through the arms, and then raise the chest up. Hands and wrists should be right under the shoulders. Hips should be as close to hands as possible. Push through the hands and keep the hips and knees elevated off the floor. The legs should be kept in parallel position. All ten fingers and ten toes should be firmly pressed into the floor, and the knees and ankles should be kept together. Do not sink into the shoulders, but push away from the floor. The shoulders should roll back, sternum is lifted, and the head is looking back without crunching the neck; this is to reach optimal opening of the chest. Do not crunch in the lower back, but lengthen out and stretch the stomach to relieve any back pain. This is Urdhva Mukha Svanasana. Stay here for three long breaths. To exit this posture exhale and reverse the pathway from Urdhva Mukha Svanasana to plank position, and push all the up to Adho Mukha Svanasana. From here inhale, and rise up to the toes, bend the knees and walk or slightly jump back in to Uttanasana. Exhale here. Then inhale stretching the arms over the head and interlock the fingers while arching the back slightly to come up to standing. Then exhale and lower the arms.

**BENEFIT:** “Urdhva Mukha Svanasana is good for people with lumbago, sciatica, and those suffering from slipped or prolapsed discs of the spine. The pose strengthens the spine and cures backaches. Due to the chest expansion the lungs gain elasticity. Also, the blood circulates properly in the pelvic region and keeps it healthy.”<sup>5</sup>

**MY EXPERIENCE:** This posture has always been one of the more difficult and uncomfortable asanas for me. I have difficulty opening my chest and rolling my shoulders back. This posture is one of the most beneficial for my tendency to slouch or roll my shoulders forward. I have learned to like this posture, because it is one of the many that provokes a very noticeable change in my body

<sup>5</sup> Iyengar, B.K.S. *Light on Yoga*. New York: Schocken Books. 1966. 109.



## • Utthita Trikonasana



**POSTURE/TECHNIQUE:** Standing in Samasthiti, inhale and raise the arms out to shoulder level. Exhale and jump or step the feet out about two-and-a-half to three feet wide. Inhale and turn out the right foot while keeping the left foot turned parallel. If a line is drawn the heel of the right foot should bisect the arch of the left foot. Now, exhale and push the hips to left without twisting, lower the trunk of the body and the right hand down next to the right foot. The left arm should be in the air kept in line with the right arm. The shoulders should be kept engaged and on the back. The body should be kept in line as if it were between two walls. No twisting of the hips or trunk. Keep the knee caps pulled up and the quadriceps engaged in order to avoid hyper extending the legs. The focus should be either straight forward or up to the sky. This is Utthita Trikonasana. Hold the posture for three deep inhales and exhales. To exit this posture inhale and windmill the arms back to shoulder level bringing the trunk up in unison. Turn the right foot back to parallel. Then exhale and lower the hands to the hips. Inhale, hold the breath, and jump the feet together. Exhale and lower the arms to the side of the body and back to Samasthiti. Repeat on the opposite side.

**BENEFIT:** "Utthita Trikonasana relieves gastritis, indigestion, acidity, and flatulence. The posture alleviates backache, helps to treat neck sprains, strengthens the ankles, and massages and tones the pelvic area. It also reduces discomfort during menstruation."<sup>6</sup>

**MY EXPERIENCE:** Utthita Trikonasana is a great posture. Although the posture is simple, I can always feel the benefit. Being a dancer I often feel a "popping" or release in my hips during the entrance of the posture. This is also a good posture for me to concentrate on not over extending my legs.

<sup>6</sup> Iyengar, B.K.S. *Yoga: The Path to Holistic Health*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2001. 53.

## • Utthita Parsvakonasana



POSTURE/TECHNIQUE: Standing in Samasthiti, inhale and raise the arms out to shoulder level. Exhale and jump or step the feet out about three and a half to four feet wide. Inhale and turn out the right foot while keeping the left foot turned parallel. If a line is drawn the heel of the right foot should bisect the arch of the left foot. Now, exhale and bend the right knee so the thigh is parallel to the ground and place the right hand down next to the inside of the right foot while bringing the left arm straight over the head stretching the left side of the body. Do not rest in the right hand; lightly place it on the ground. Keep the shoulders pulled down and sliding down on the back; do not sink in to them. Fight gravity and keep the quadriceps and hamstrings engaged. The knee and ankle should be aligned. Both of the feet should be completely and firmly planted into the ground. There should be no twisting in the hips; they should be facing forward as in Utthita Trikonasana. Focus should be either straightforward or looking up to the sky. This is Utthita Parsvakonasana. Stay here for three lengthened breaths. To exit the posture inhale and windmill the arms back to shoulder level bringing the trunk up and straightening the right leg in unison. Turn the right foot back to parallel. Then exhale and lower the hands to the hips. Inhale, hold the breath, and jump the feet together. Exhale and lower the arms to the side of the body and back to Samasthiti. Repeat on the opposite side.

BENEFIT: “Utthita Parsvakonasana enhances lung capacity, tones the muscles of the heart, and relieves sciatic and arthritic pain. It also reduces fat on the waist and hips, and improves digestion and helps the elimination of waste.”<sup>7</sup>

MY EXPERIENCE: Utthita Parsvakonasana is a good posture for me to stretch my inner thighs, the side of my core body, and my hips. It is also a good way for me to strengthen my legs. This asana is a great way for me to gain balance, flexibility, and strength at once.

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<sup>7</sup> Iyengar. 61.



## • Virabhadrasana



POSTURE/TECHNIQUE: Standing in Samasthiti, inhale and raise the arms out to shoulder level. Exhale and jump or step the feet out about three and a half to four feet wide. Inhale and turn out the right foot while keeping the left foot turned parallel. If a line is drawn the heel of the right foot should bisect the arch of the left foot. Hips should be facing towards the right leg. From here, inhale and stretch the arms over head and interlock the fingers. Next, exhale and slowly bend the right leg to a 90-degree angle. The quadriceps and hamstring muscles should be engaged and suspending the body. The body should not be giving in to gravity, or resting in the hips. The pelvis should be in alignment with no anterior or posterior tilt. Shoulders should be kept sliding down the back, and the focus can be either forward or up towards the sky. Feet should be firmly planted into the floor with all ten toes spread wide for optimal balance. This is Virabhadrasana. Hold the posture and complete three long deep inhale and exhales. To exit this posture, inhale and slowly extend the right leg. Next, exhale and turn the right leg to parallel, and lower the arms. Inhale, hold the breath, and jump the feet together back to Samasthiti. Repeat on the opposite side.

BENEFIT: “Virabhadrasana tones the abdominal muscles and relieves backache, lumbago, and sciatica. It relieves acidity and improves digestion. The posture also strengthens the bladder, corrects a displaced uterus, relieves menstrual pain, and reduces heavy menstruation.”<sup>8</sup>

MY EXPERIENCE: This asana is an interesting one. It is good for my balance as well as my strength, and always allows me to work on pelvis alignment. I often find myself moving into the posture with an anterior tilt in my hips, and then later having to fix it. I am working on moving into the posture with correct alignment without making adjustments.

<sup>8</sup> Iyengar. 77.

## • Ardha Chandrasana



**POSTURE/TECHNIQUE:** Standing in Samasthiti, inhale and raise the arms out to shoulder level. Exhale and jump or step the feet out about three and a half to four feet wide. Inhale and turn out the right foot while keeping the left foot turned parallel. If a line is drawn the heel of the right foot should bisect the arch of the left foot. The hips and torso should be facing forward. Slowly exhale, bend the right leg while reaching the right fingertips down to the floor in front of the right foot. Then, lift the left leg while straightening the right leg. The left leg should be kept parallel and horizontal to the floor, while the right leg is turned out. The hips should still be facing forward with no twisting. The left arm should be in line with the right reaching up to the sky. The focus can either be at the right hand on the floor, facing forward, or looking up to the sky. Both legs should be highly engaged for maximum balance, and to avoid hyperextension. The posture should feel as though it could be done in between two walls. Shoulder should be kept sliding on to the back. The core muscles should be engaged, and the right foot should be spread wide. This is Ardha Chandrasana. Although it is often hard to balance, try to hold the posture for three deep breaths. To exit this posture slowly exhale and bend the right knee while bringing the left leg slowly and safely back to its origination. Inhale and come up to standing. Exhale and turn the right foot back to parallel while lowering the arms. Inhale, hold the breath, and jump the feet together back to Samasthiti. Repeat on the opposite side.

**BENEFIT:** "Ardha Chandrasana tones the lumbar and sacral spine, relieving backache. It corrects misalignment of the shoulders, and helps relieve sciatica. The posture improves circulation in the feet and relieves gastritis and acidity. It also corrects a prolapsed uterus."<sup>9</sup>

**MY EXPERIENCE:** Ardha Chandrasana is one of my most difficult asanas. I often have a very hard time balancing in this posture, while keeping my hips facing forward. It is a very good posture for me to work on balance and the alignment of my legs and hips. I find that it is very hard for me to extend my lifted leg so it is all the way open. I tend to keep my hip flexor engaged which does not allow me to move into the complete posture.

<sup>9</sup> Iyengar. 178.



## • Virasana



**POSTURE/TECHNIQUE:** Standing in Samasthiti, inhale and stretch the arms overhead interlocking the fingers. Slowly exhale and lower all the way down to a full Utkatasna squatted position, and lower the knees completely to the floor. Inhale and rise up to the knees while spreading the shins apart in a parallel position and keeping the knees together. Exhale and slowly lower the sit-bones between the legs. Keep the pelvis aligned with no anterior or posterior tilting. The feet should be in line with the ankles, shins, and knees. The spine should be stacked and relaxed for optimal breathing. The hands are in front on the knees. This is Virasana. Take a three long inhales and exhales in this posture. To exit this posture, inhale and rise up to the knees bringing the shins back together. Exhale and place the hands down in front and rock back to the feet extending into Uttanasana. From here, inhale, stretch the arms over the head and interlock the fingers while arching the back slightly to come up to standing. Then exhale and lower the arms, back to Samasthiti.

**BENEFIT:** “Virasana eases stiffness in the shoulders, neck, hip joints, knees, and groin. It relieves backache and reduces the pain of broken, deviated, or fused tailbones. The posture also corrects herniated discs, improves circulation in the feet, and relieves calcaneal spurs.”<sup>10</sup>

**MY EXPERIENCE:** This posture is uncomfortable for me after a certain amount of time. It seems to stress my knees more than help them. Although it is somewhat painful for me, I do know that it helps for proper leg alignment.

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<sup>10</sup> Iyengar. 85.

## • Sirsasana



POSTURE/TECHNIQUE: Begin by starting on all fours (hands and knees). Place the elbows on the floor shoulder width apart. Clasp the hands together and exhale to place the head between the arms, keeping the clasped hands directly behind the crown of the head. Inhale and bring the legs close into the body with the feet still on the floor. Exhale and hold here. Next, inhale and firmly push the elbows and arms into the floor releasing any pressure on the head or neck, and raise the legs into the chest and core. Exhale here, and find balance. Make sure the weight is in the arms and not the head. Push down with the shoulders to create the sensation of almost floating the head off the ground. Now inhale, and slowly raise the legs into the air to full extension, moving through the tucked position. The body should be completely extended and vertical. Feet flexed and legs engaged. The core body should be engaged for maximum balance, and a strong force should be pushing into the floor through the arms and shoulders. This is Sirsasana. Stay in this posture for an extended amount of breaths. This asana can be held for up to ten minutes for optimal benefits. To exit the posture exhale and slowly lower the legs through a tucked position all the way to the floor. Then release the hands and head, and stay here folded over with the arms stretched out in front on the floor. This is otherwise known as child's pose or embryo. Take a few breaths here and then inhale and slowly raise the trunk up and sit on the knees. There are many variations of this posture. The legs can be held still to concentrate mainly on the breath, or the legs can move through different sequences in order to connect the movement with the breath.

BENEFIT: "Sirsasana alleviates insomnia, builds stamina, and reduces the occurrence of heart palpitations. It strengthens the lungs, improves the function of the pituitary and pineal glands, and increases the hemoglobin content in the blood. The posture also relieves the symptoms of colds, coughs, and tonsillitis. If Sirsasana is done in conjunction with Sarvangasana it brings relief from digestive and eliminatory problems."<sup>11</sup>

MY EXPERIENCE: This has always been a fun posture for me due to my background as a gymnast and my comfort with being inverted. I love to try different leg variations as well as just receiving the benefits of being still. This is a great place for me to work on the flow of my breathing.

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<sup>11</sup> Iyengar. 121.



## • Sarvangasana



POSTURE/TECHNIQUE: Start in a seated position with the legs together and parallel in front. Exhale and lower the body to the floor placing the arms next to the body. Inhale and lift the legs over the head to reach the feet to the floor behind the head. Position the shoulders so the weight is on the outside; this is done by adjusting and rolling the shoulders outward. Place the hands on the low back. Be sure to NOT turn the head in this posture. Make sure the bulk of the weight is in the shoulders and not the neck or head. The neck should be extended and not shortened or crunched. Exhale here and then inhale and slowly take one leg at a time into the air directly in line with the core body. Flex the feet, don't turn the head, and keep the hands pushing on the low back for maximum support and lengthening. The leg muscles and core should be activated. This is Sarvangasana. Stay in this posture for an extended amount of breaths. Sarvangasana can be held for up to ten minutes for optimal benefits. There are many leg and torso variations that can be done in this posture. To exit this posture, exhale and slowly lower the legs back over the head to the floor. From here, inhale release the arms and drag them overhead to the feet. Exhale and slowly lower the legs down the floor rolling down the back one vertebra at a time, keeping the legs together. Lay here for a few breaths to let the body relax. Sarvangasana is a difficult posture and be aware that the body might feel very different afterwards. Small back spasms are natural.

BENEFIT: "Sarvangasana alleviates hyperextension, relieves insomnia, soothes the nerves, and improves the function of the thyroid and parathyroid glands. It alleviates asthma, bronchitis, and throat ailments, relieves breathlessness and palpitations, and helps to treat colds and sinus blockages. The posture improves bowel movements, relieves colitis, helps treat hemorrhoids, and alleviates urinary disorders. Sarvangasana also helps to treat hernia and a prolapsed uterus, and reduces uterine fibroids. It relieves congestion and heaviness in the ovaries and helps to treat ovarian cysts, as well as, reduces menstrual cramps and helps to regulate menstrual flow."<sup>12</sup>

MY EXPERIENCE: Again, I feel very comfortable in inverted postures, and can really feel the benefits in my body. I love this posture. I often have slight back spasms after releasing the posture, but I know that it is natural, and that my body is just going through a deep stretch and change.

<sup>12</sup> Iyengar. 125.



## • Halasana



**POSTURE/TECHNIQUE:** Start in a seated position with the legs in parallel stretched out in front. Exhale and lower the body to the floor placing the arms next to the body. Inhale and lift the legs over the head to reach the feet to the floor behind the head. Keep the arms stretched behind or drag them to grab the soles of the feet. Keep the majority of the weight in the shoulders and out of the neck and head. Do NOT turn the head in this position. Stay here and take a few extended breaths, relax and stretch the posterior side of the body. This is Halasana. To exit the posture, inhale and either keep the arms behind the body or drag them back to their starting position. Now, exhale and slowly lower the body back to the floor one vertebra at a time. Lie still for a few breaths and feel the change in the back.

**BENEFIT:** "Halasana relieves fatigue and boosts energy levels. It rejuvenates the abdominal organs, and improves digestion. The posture also lengthens the spine and improves its alignment, and controls hyperextension."<sup>13</sup>

**MY EXPERIENCE:** Halasana, like Sarvangasana, is a comfortable posture for me. This is one of most transformative postures for my back. I always feel like I get a tremendous stretch through my spine.

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<sup>13</sup> Iyengar. 131.

## • Bhujangasana



**POSTURE/TECHNIQUE:** This posture is done as a counter pose for Sarvangasana and Halasana. Bhujangasana allows for a deep stretch of the anterior side of the body. To move in to the posture start in Samasthiti, inhale and raise the arms over head interlocking fingers. Slowly exhale and move in to Uttanasana. Inhale while holding Uttanasana. From Uttanasana, exhale and hold it, lift up on the toes, press firmly into the ground, bend the knees and jump back to Caturanga Dandasana. Lower the body all the way to the floor. From here inhale and pull the chest through the arms. Keep the lower body on the floor and raise the upper body. Lift the sternum and arch the upper back while lengthening the low back and core. Push firmly into all ten fingers and toes. Keep the legs in parallel, and the shoulders rolling open. The focus should be forward. This is Bhujangasana. Stay here for three breaths. To exit the posture, exhale and lower the upper body to the floor. Place the right ear to the floor and take a rest. Repeat the posture again, and after exiting place the opposite ear on the floor to take a rest.

**BENEFIT:** “Bhujangasana is beneficial for an injured spine and in cases of slight displacement of spinal discs the practice of this pose replaces the discs in the original position. The spinal region is toned and the fully expanded.”<sup>14</sup>

**MY EXPERIENCE:** Bhujangasana is very similar to Urdhva Mukha Svanasana. I find my body reacting quite similarly in both postures. I find that Bhujangasana takes almost more effort out of my body. It is much harder on my back, and takes more energy to hold the posture. I also feel a very deep core stretch in the asana.

<sup>14</sup> Iyengar, B.K.S. *Light on Yoga*. New York: Schocken Books. 1966. 108.



## • Maricasana



**POSTURE/TECHNIQUE:** Starting in Samasthiti inhale and stretch the arms overhead interlocking fingers. Slowly exhale and move into Uttanasana. Inhale while in Uttanasana. Now, exhale, keeping the hands placed on the floor and move through Utkatasana to a seated position on the floor. Inhale and stretch the legs. Next, exhale and bring the right leg into the chest keeping the foot planted into the ground and in a parallel position. The leg should be as close to the body as possible. The left leg should still be stretched forward with the foot flexed. Inhale and bring the right arm up overhead and then exhale, bringing it forward and wrap it around the right leg from the inside out. Grab the left hand behind the back with the right hand still wrapping around the right leg. Inhale here, and then exhale and fold forward over the extended left leg. Keep both hips on the ground and facing forward. Do not rock back off the sit bones. Let the head hang; do not hold tension in the neck. This is Maricasana. Hold the posture for three extended breaths. To exit the posture, inhale and raise the body up, exhale and release the arms and stretch the leg. Repeat on the other side.

**BENEFIT:** “Maricasana creates better circulation of blood around the abdominal organs and keeps them healthy. The dorsal region of the spine is also<sup>15</sup> exercised in this posture.”

**MY EXPERIENCE:** I used to not be able to complete this posture. I had a hard time opening my shoulder enough to reach to the clasp behind me. Now, that I can move into the posture with more ease, I can feel the benefits more. I can achieve a deep stretch in my hamstring, as well as my shoulder.

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<sup>15</sup> Iyengar. 161.



## • Janusirsasana



**POSTURE/TECHNIQUE:** Starting in Samasthiti inhale and stretch the arms overhead interlocking fingers. Slowly exhale and move into Uttanasana. Inhale while in Uttanasana. Now, exhale, keeping the hands placed on the floor and move through Utkatasana to a seated position on the floor. Inhale and stretch the legs. Make sure the sit bones are firmly planted into the floor. Next, exhale, turn out the right leg and bend the knee, bringing the foot to meet the inner thigh of the left leg. Inhale reaching the arms up, and then exhale bringing the hands forward to grab the left foot, keeping the back straight. Inhale here, and then exhale and fold the body over the left leg. Pull with the hands for maximum stretch. Release the neck muscles and let the head hang. Keep the left leg engaged and parallel with the foot flexed. Scoop the stomach under the ribs for maximum creasing in the hips. Relax and take three long breaths. This is Janusirsasana. To exit the posture, inhale to sit up, and then exhale to stretch the right leg out. Repeat on the other side.

**BENEFIT:** “Janusirsasana eases the effects of stress on the heart and the mind, and stabilizes blood pressure. It gradually corrects the curvature of the spine and rounded shoulders, and tones the abdominal organs. The posture also relieves stiffness in the legs and strengthens their muscles.”<sup>16</sup>

**MY EXPERIENCE:** Janusirsasana is a posture where I feel a stretch in my hips as well as my hamstring and low back. This is a posture that takes minimal effort and gives great benefits. I can usually relax enough in the asana to feel the change in my body.

<sup>16</sup> Iyengar, B.K.S. *Yoga: The Path to Holistic Health*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2001. 95.

## • Pascimottanasana



POSTURE/TECHNIQUE: Starting in Samasthiti inhale and stretch the arms overhead interlocking fingers. Slowly exhale and move into Uttanasana. Inhale while in Uttanasana. Now, exhale, keeping the hands placed on the floor and move through Utkatasana to a seated position on the floor. Inhale and stretch the legs. Make sure both sit bones are firmly planted into the floor. The legs should be parallel, engaged and the heels and ankle should be together. Exhale here. Next, inhale and stretch the arms overhead. Exhale and reach both hands to the feet, either placing them on the floor next to the feet or grabbing the big toes with the index and middle fingers. Keep the back extended here. Inhale and hold the posture, then exhale and pull the body forward, folding in half. Scoop the stomach muscles under the ribs to allow for maximum creasing in the hips. Keep the hips moving forward, do not let them roll under this will create a deep stretch in the hamstring muscles. This is Paschimottanasana. Stay in the posture for three extended breaths. To exit the posture inhale and sit up.

BENEFIT: "Paschimottanasana rests and massages the heart, and soothes the adrenal glands. It tones the kidneys, bladder, and pancreas, activates a sluggish liver and improves the digestive system. The posture also helps to treat impotence and stimulates the ovaries, uterus, and the entire reproductive system."<sup>17</sup>

MY EXPERIENCE: Paschimottanasana is a posture that I do on a daily basis. I find this to be the asana where I can get the deepest stretch in my hamstrings without exerting too much energy. I like to rest in this posture and let my body go through a great and beneficial change.

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<sup>17</sup> Iyengar. 103.



## • Padmasana



POSTURE/TECHNIQUE: Starting in Samasthiti inhale and stretch the arms overhead interlocking fingers. Slowly exhale and move into Uttanasana. Inhale while in Uttanasana. Now, exhale, keeping the hands placed on the floor and move through Utkatasana to a seated position on the floor. Inhale and stretch the legs. Make sure both sit bones are firmly planted into the floor. From here exhale grab the right foot and bend the leg bringing the foot into the crease of the hip on the left leg. Repeat this action bringing the left leg into the crease of the right hip. The legs should open and flat on the floor. The ankles should be secure and there should be no straining in the knees. There will be some stretch in the knees, but there should not be pain. Pay attention to the alignment of the knees and ankle. There should be no twisting. The sit bones should be rooted into the floor, there should be no rolling back in the hips, and the back should be extended. Place the hands on the knees of their respected leg. The focus should be forward or the chin can be tucked. Stay here for an extended amount of breaths. This is Padmasana, also known as Lotus Posture. This posture is great for mantras, chanting, and pranayama. To exit the posture, inhale and slowly stretch one leg at a time in front to the original starting position. Repeat with the other foot on top.

BENEFIT: "Padmasana is good for curing stiffness in the ankles and knees. Since the blood is made to circulate in the lumbar region and the abdomen, the spine and abdominal organs are toned. The position of the crossed legs and the erect back keeps the mind attentive and alert."<sup>18</sup>

MY EXPERIENCE: This is the most difficult posture for me. My legs just do not work that way. In the asana my hips get tight, and my knees strain. I can complete the posture on a good day, but it usually creates some pain in my knees. I usually tend to do this posture with one leg in Padmasana and one in a regular cross-legged position, which relieves the strain in both of my knees.

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<sup>18</sup> Iyengar, B.K.S. *Light on Yoga*. New York: Schocken Books. 1966. 132.



## • Urdhva Dhanurasana



**POSTURE/TECHNIQUE:** Start lying down face up with the feet and ankles together. Inhale and place the hands right in front of the shoulders next to the ears, palms down, and bend the legs in so the feet are right behind the sit bones. Exhale here. Next, inhale and press into the hands and rock to the crown of the head, lifting the body slightly off the floor. Exhale here. Now, inhale and press into the hands and feet and extend the hips all the way up to a back bend. Open the chest and shoulders and keep the knees and feet in line. Do not turn out the hips, legs, or feet. Let the head hang; do not hold tension in the neck. Keep the legs and arms stretched as much as possible, and all ten fingers and toes deeply rooted into the ground. Stay here for three long inhales and exhales. This is Urdhva Dhanurasana. To exit the posture, exhale, tuck the chin in and slowly bend the legs and arms lowering the body to the floor. Inhale and lengthen the arms and legs. Stay here and turn the head to one side and take a rest. Repeat three times.

**BENEFIT:** “Urdhva Dhanurasana prevents the arteries of the heart from thickening and ensures healthy blood circulation throughout the body. It tones the spine and strengthens the abdominal and pelvic organs. The posture also stimulates the pituitary, pineal, and thyroid glands, and prevents prolapse of the uterus, as well as, prevents excess menstrual flow and eases menstrual cramps.”<sup>19</sup>

**MY EXPERIENCE:** Although I understand the benefits of this posture I have a hard time bringing myself to do it. The problem with the posture is that my wrists get really sore no matter what technique I try. I have really weak wrists due to my past as a gymnast and tumbler. I can complete the posture without too much strain, but I need an extra minute afterwards to relieve my wrists.

<sup>19</sup> Iyengar, B.K.S. *Yoga: The Path to Holistic Health*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2001. 141.

## • Savasana



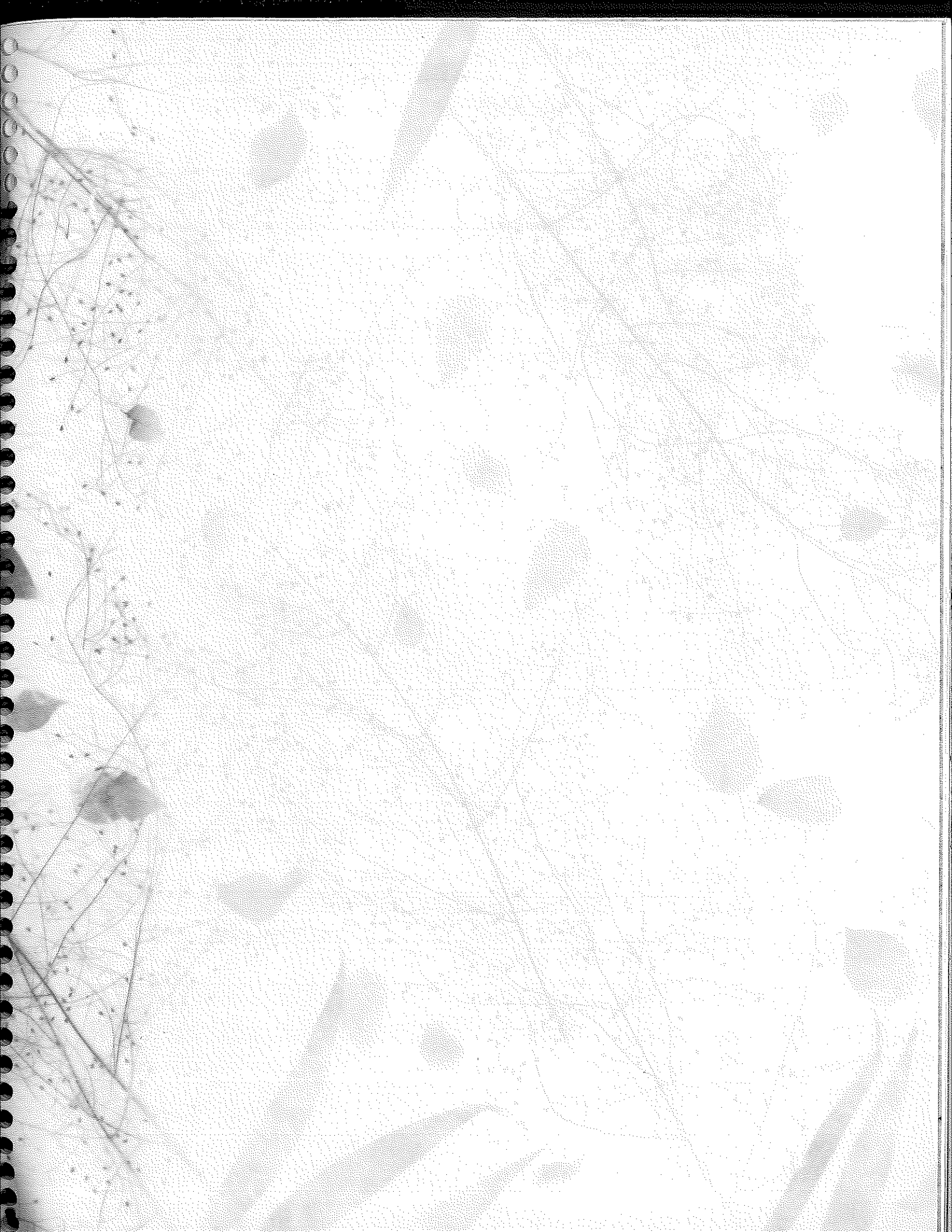
POSTURE/TECHNIQUE: Lie down face up. Let the legs roll out and arms relax. Turn the head to one side, and relax. Exert no effort whatsoever. This is Savasana, otherwise known as corpse pose. This is posture where the body and mind relaxes, and the goal is to concentrate on the breath. Do this posture at the end of every yoga practice, and stay here for at least five minutes.

BENEFIT: "Savasana helps to alleviate nervous tension, migraine, insomnia, and chronic fatigue syndrome. It relaxes the body, eases breathing, soothes the nervous system, and brings peace of mind. The posture also enhances recovery from all long-term or serious illnesses."<sup>20</sup>

MY EXPERIENCE: I love Savasana! This is a great place for me to relax and work on lengthening my inhalation and exhalation to the full potential. It also brings a culmination to my practice.

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<sup>20</sup> Iyengar. 151.





# SECTION ELEVEN



# YOGA AND DANCE

REBECCA GREENBAUM

Throughout the past three years at Loyola Marymount University I have been exploring the discipline of yoga and its effect on me as a dancer. In this last year alone I have completed six different yoga philosophy classes and a Vinyasa Krama certification with Srivatsa Ramaswami. My goal is to showcase the similarities between dance and yoga, and to share how the concepts in yoga and yoga philosophy can be highly beneficial for the dancer as an artist and performer. My research is based on personal knowledge and experience acquired over the years, combined with interviews I conducted specifically for this project. My interviewees are five extraordinary women -- each with unique experience in both yoga and dance. Two of the women, Carol Rossi and Sara Mata, have extensive background in the practice and teaching of yoga as well as some experience training in dance. Both women are well recognized in the Los Angeles area as accomplished teachers. Tekla Kostek and Jill Nunes-Jensen are both extremely talented ballerinas who have been training their whole lives and now teach ballet in studio and University settings. In addition to their ballet training, more recently they have explored the yoga practice. The fifth woman is Holly Johnston, a renowned professional dancer and a teacher of *Yoga for Dancers* and *Advanced Modern Dance* at Loyola Marymount University. The extensive interviews impart a wealth of knowledge, including individual, authoritative insights into the following issues: the differences they experience in their own dancing since training in yoga; the distinctions they see in their students who do both dance and yoga; and how the use of yoga concepts (breath, clarification of the mind, strength and flexibility, and determination) are beneficial to a dancer; and much more.

To validate the authority of my esteemed interviewees, I am providing a brief profile of each woman's experience in yoga. This background begins with the two amazing yoga teachers, then moves to my ballet dancers/teachers, and concludes with Holly Johnston.

Carol Rossi began studying yoga in 1991 with Baron Baptiste doing a Bikram style class. During this introduction to yoga, Rossi was having tremendous insights and realizations through the practice. In two years time she ventured beyond that class to other yoga environments. From 1993 to 1996, she studied the work of many notable gurus, including Ana Forrest, Erich Schiffmann, and other Los Angeles-based teachers. In May 1996, she attended a series of workshops on yoga philosophy and therapy at a Yoga Works with Gary Kraftsow. In early 1997, she found a different teacher -- Trish O'Reilly -- with whom she studied for five years. Rossi completed a two-year teacher training with O'Reilly in 2000. In addition to her extensive yoga practice she has also studied the *Yoga Sutra*, Sanskrit, chanting, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the *Upanisads*.

Sara Mata is one of the original instructors at Yoga Works in Santa Monica. From 1983 to 1989, she was primarily a dancer, studying everything from ballet to jazz, modern, African and tap. She also worked as a choreographer for several small troupes. She became committed to yoga and its healing and meditative qualities to respond to chronic knee problems and to help recover from an eventual surgery. Mata's training in yoga comes by way of a number of prominent gurus, including Swami Satchitananda, Gary Kraftsow, TKV Desikachar, and Pataabhi Jois. She has been studying yoga with increasing passion since 1974, and has been teaching yoga since 1985. Jill Nunes-Jensen is a dance veteran of 24 years, specializing in ballet, with additional experience in classical modern, Limon, contact improvisation, tap jazz, and tango. She has been practicing yoga regularly for the past two-and-a-half years.



Tekla Kostek, a superior ballet dancer, has been taking a variety of yoga classes since 1998, beginning with Kundalini yoga twice a week. Though, as a dancer, she determined it might be more advantageous to pursue something more physical (as opposed to a practice that required so much mediation and concentration on the breath). When she moved to Los Angeles in 2001, not dancing and unemployed, she decided to give yoga another try, started taking some classes, and soon became committed. Kostek has been practicing yoga regularly ever since and is a strong advocate of its healthy benefits.

Holly Johnston, the final interviewee, has been dancing since 1992 and practicing yoga since 1998. Her initial practice started with Stephanie Gilliland, Artistic Director of *Tongue*. More recently she has studied under Wendy Samuels, Time Miller, and Chuck Miller. Johnston's influences presently include other teachers, topical reading, practical application, and the foundational ideas from her early teachers.

Ever since I have been practicing yoga and dancing at the same time I have noticed many changes in my technique, my mental and emotional stability, and my artistry. I have gained a better understanding of biomechanics, and alignment of the body, which has allowed me to improve my all around technique. I have also noticed an increased attention to detail, a sense of calmness in my mind, and an improvement in my over all strength. Interestingly, I am not the only person to notice changes in me as a dancer due to my yoga practice. Every woman I interviewed had some sort of enlightenment in their dancing because of the benefits of their yoga practice. Carol Rossi explains how when she was dancing and practicing yoga in the years 1991 to 1995, she became interested in different styles of dance. She explains: "The more entrenched I became in the yoga the more I became interested in slower moving, more meditative forms like Javanese classical dance, which I studied only briefly at UCLA but it interested me very much. I

would have been bored with this at an earlier point in my life.” Jill Nunes-Jensen, as well, claims to have truly become a much better dancer because of her yoga practice and interest. She states: “I now *allow* myself to move in ways that make dancing easier, freer and more enjoyable. Ballet does not teach you how to move as much as it teaches the body and mind to mimic, hit poses, balance, hide effort, and maintain constant composure. Practicing yoga, I’ve allowed my body the chance to be off-balance, to struggle, to show effort, and to breathe. These things all seem to contrast ballet, yet they can actually enhance your dancing if you use them to find insights into your dancing.” Tekla Kostek has had a similar experience. She believes that her stamina and muscular strength have greatly improved because of yoga. This endurance is due to the fact that she learned how to breathe—something she wished she had learned much earlier in her career.

Holly Johnston also believes that yoga has helped her capacity for breathing. In addition, she has found her body to have more elasticity in range of motion. In response to whether or not she has seen changes in her dancing while practicing yoga, Johnston answers: “I think that there is a greater sensitivity to the actual physical self as well as the subtle self. I think it is a place where I find practicing the principles of alignment to be more effective, and done in a place that is more internal, individualized and much more personal to myself. I am able to be engaged in rigor in my body and not lose my mind, and to retain a sense of calm, discipline, and focus. I think that yoga has helped me become more disciplined and have a greater desire for rigor.”

After inquiring about how yoga has changed my interviewees dancing, I was interested in how training in yoga might be helpful as a teacher of dance. I asked the dance teachers to respond to the question of how experience in the yoga practice could be useful in teaching a dance class. Their observations were exactly as I imagined: a greater sense of the body, a better

eye to catch alignment corrections, and a more articulate vocabulary in teaching. Jill Nunes-Jensen notes that yoga teachers talk much more throughout a class, a technique she has found worthwhile integrating into her ballet studio classes. Having experience in yoga has enabled her to be more articulate while teaching. Jensen adds: "It has also helped me to provide more appropriate analogies about the body; so that a wider range of students can access what I am speaking about or the ideal that I am trying to posit."

Although Kostek admits to being a novice in kinesiology, at least with respect to terms of the names and where all the body's muscles and bones are, she has an exceptional eye for body movement. She has discovered that many of the aspects in yoga in regards to alignment are quite similar to ballet. Like Nunes-Jensen, Kostek believes that once she acquired a deeper understanding of what was going on with her body during yoga, it was easier for her to communicate to her students what was going on in ballet. She describes an example: "Yoga and ballet are quite similar in regards to squaring off the hips and the use of the inner thigh. Also in regards to any kind of cambre or back bend. All the back bends in yoga are about lengthening up as opposed to crunching down in your spine. All of that is exactly what ballet technique is."

Holly Johnston had a much more philosophical response to my question: "I think one of the greatest things it helps me with is to see the landscape of the human being rather than just the body. I feel like with a more yogic or a more yoga-based philosophy in approaching the dancers you can see more clearly into their nervous system and their level of understanding inside themselves. What I think yoga is really meant to do is to guide the individual in their own individual experience having leadership, ownership, and dominion over the destiny of your life."

In addition to how yoga has affected their teaching, I was curious if any of my interviewees could notice a difference in their students who practice yoga and dance as opposed



to those who do not. Carol Rossi, a teacher of yoga, claims there is a definite difference with her students who are also dancers compared to those who are not. She says the dancers are much more attuned to their bodies. Rossi goes on, "Not only are they more coordinated and able to quickly learn postures, but the quality of their movement is qualitatively different than most other, non-dance major students. Their movement is more fluid, graceful, refined." Sara Mata, the other yoga teacher, notes that her students who are also dancers usually have a better sense of learning movement patterns, better alignment awareness, more discipline, and are less self-conscious.

Holly Johnston's perspective was based on her dance students who also participate in yoga. She states, "I think that the students who practice yoga engage their physical bodies with a deeper level of awareness. I find them oftentimes to have a deeper level or greater sense of concentration. Students who are engaged in yoga are more readily able to engage the dispassionate observer than those who do not practice yoga. I think that those people who practice yoga work on the discipline of the dispassionate observer. So, I think it can lend itself to a freer exploration." This idea of the dispassionate observer that Johnston discusses is one of the most beneficial ideas I have carried over into my dancing. It has helped me grow and improve by being better able to do the work, participate in class, and learn without becoming over emotional and too passionate about every detail.

Considering all of the women I interviewed have a strong background in either dance or yoga, or both, I was interested whether they would recommend yoga to dancers. If so, I wanted to know under what specific circumstances they would make such a recommendation. Carol Rossi refers to the term *Vinyasa* and describes it as a form of yoga that includes simple movements coordinated with breath, something anyone can do. She believes that dancers often

overlook this kind of practice, but that it could be very beneficial. Rossi explains, "I think there is an over-emphasis on the workout aspects of yoga. I think dancers and non-dancers alike could benefit from more mindful approach, a focused, breath-based yoga practice. But most people just want to sweat. There is no point in just moving into complex postures to achieve the pose. The idea is to be present through the whole process. I think that provides a benefit for dancers because dance is usually about achieving the choreography, whereas yoga is an internal process, not about performing something."

Sara Mata states simply that she would recommend yoga to all dancers as a way to take care of themselves, to prevent injuries, and to increase the duration of their performing life. Jill Nunes-Jensen also responded that she would confidently recommend yoga to any dancer. However, she is quick to point out that she would not consider yoga as a substitution for dancing, but as a way to augment it.

Holly Johnston responded very enthusiastically to the question. She thinks yoga should be done under any circumstance. All dancers and all people should do yoga all the time! She states: "I think that there is something extraordinary about the union of linking breathing to moving. I think that if you are deformed with things that people claim can never be transformed, that you should do yoga. There are the transformative properties in both the science and art of yoga, and in the mixture of those two elements you have magic. I think that anybody anywhere under any circumstances can create the environment and create the possibility for a little bit of magic to show up." Johnston is very encouraging when it comes to the power of yoga.

Since all the women would recommend yoga to the dance population, I was interested in what they thought were the general benefits that yoga could offer the dancer. Carol Rossi thinks that a slower moving, more contemplative way of practicing can enhance anyone's (dancer or

non) overall self-awareness. Especially, she believes, by increasing awareness of movement in space, the use of breath with movement, and the ability to understand how to manipulate particular parts of the body (like flattening the various curves of the spine, for example) while moving into and out of postures. She explains how there are also lifestyle and meditative aspects of yoga that can allow one to maintain a high level of health overall. Rossi gave an example of these lifestyle aspects: "Sometimes, for example, people's desires change with serious yoga practice; that extra beer or cigarette suddenly holds less appeal. Since dancers are athletes and their bodies are their tools for expression, maintaining good health is vitally important."

Jill Nunes-Jensen believes that there are enormous benefits. She says that practicing yoga can teach you to find *center* without relying on the mirror, it can help you to find your true alignment. Nunes-Jensen also believes that yoga can save your life as a dancer and performer. Some of the general benefits that Tekla Kostek thinks yoga holds for a dancer include stamina with the use of breath, and sheer strength. Her desire is that the use of breath would be stressed more in dance classes and programs. Kostek thinks that we as dancers try to push ourselves and keep going, and no one tells us to breathe. This idea of always being *on the go* and always doing something, is an idea she thinks is probably cultural, and a part of the western society. She notes that it is not asked if you can do this while you are breathing or in a relaxed state, as opposed to being constantly busy. Basically, the concepts of breath that yoga uses is what Kostek believes to be one of the most beneficial aspects for a dancer.

According to Holly Johnston there are so many physical benefits yoga can help to correct in the imbalances of working in choreographic process. She explains that choreography is so often repetitious and on one side. Choreography is not about balance, but it is about



accomplishing the work. Because of this imbalance in choreography, she believes that practicing yoga while doing a dance or choreographic process can offer and restore that balance that you are not able to achieve while you are engaged in the process. Johnston took the idea further and talked about how yoga is a place where the dancer is given a home inside their body that is not about always producing performance results. To just stop, to have pause, and to return to yourself as a human being – not as an artist, not as these defined other entities, but just as a human being engaged in the world and engaged in living. She states, “Dancers have the unique challenge of never getting to leave their work, never getting to leave their art, never getting to leave any of those things because you are trapped inside your body. I think that yoga is the place where you can actually be in your body, but leave some of the extraneous obstacles and hindrances behind and actually feel for a moment what it is like to *just be* without any other definition. *Just be.*”

Throughout my interviews I was impressed with the amount of knowledge that was being expressed, and the fact that everyone had brought up the importance of the breath before I even got to my question about how yoga’s idea of breath can benefit the dancer. In my experience with yoga I have learned how to move with my breath. The idea of inhaling while expanding, and exhaling with release or contraction has helped me tremendously with my dancing. I have been able to move with much more clarity and dimension due to the yogic ideas of breath. Carol Rossi confirms this; “Of course if one learns how to breathe in yoga it can assist the breathing in dance.” And Sara Mata explained how the breath/pranayama helps to develop an unrushed, moment-to-moment awareness, as well as to open the body to its maximum. I completely agree. I have noticed that ever since I have been working more on my breath in my dancing I have been able to move with greater fullness.

Jill Nunes-Jensen sees the ideas of breath in dance and yoga as a major difference. She explains how she is still working on how to breathe, since she has spent her whole life hiding the effort in ballet. She has a hard time letting everyone know in yoga classes when she is exerting herself through her breath. Tekla Kostek has definitely been in the same situation as Jill Nunes-Jensen. She has been a ballet dancer her whole life and consequently has been encouraged to hide her breath and effort. But she also thinks the tendency when you are dancing or doing a show is to take in air and not to expel that air. In performance situations, the dancer must deal with considerable nervous energy and mental stress. Using the breath is even that much more important in this condition. Proper use of breath is not stressed enough. Kostek adds that when you use your breath during dancing you relieve so much tension and increase your stamina. The experience is all together more pleasant.

In the interview with Holly Johnston she explains how the coordination of inhale with expansion and the coordination of exhale with release are very uniform and very parallel to the principles used in contemporary dance. She describes how in many forms of dance the use of the inhale is to create space and to expand the joints, and then the exhale is used to create greater possibility for contraction and release. Johnston believes that yoga's even flow of inhale and exhale creates a dynamic action inside the torso and inside the spine, which is something that we investigate very often, especially in contemporary dance

At this time in the interview process I was realizing that what we had discussed was mainly the physical aspects of yoga. Yoga is not only about the body, it is also very much about the mind and soul. The practice of yoga includes the process of clearing one's mind and focusing on one thing. The breath/pranayama, and mantras are oftentimes tools for the yogi to use in order for the clarification process. (I will admit that I am not very advanced in yoga and

that my mind does still wander during my practice.) The clearing of the mind takes years of practice and is quite difficult to achieve. Just working on the concept has helped me as a dancer to be present in my movement. Carol Rossi does not think that she would necessarily call the process of “clearing the mind” beneficial for the dancer, but “focusing the mind on one thing, the present” is the key. She states that we live in the past and future most of the time and have a really hard time staying present. This is where the meditative aspect of yoga can be useful – to teach us to focus on the posture, the breath, and the mantra. Rossi asserts that if the dancer is only thinking about what he/she looks like on stage instead of becoming the dance, it shows. “You can see if someone is ‘performing’ verses ‘being.’”

Sara Mata considers the clarification of mind to be a useful tool so the dancer’s sense of timing can be correct. She believes that clearing the mind is beneficial with the dancer’s use of space; so the spatial awareness is *unswerving*. And above all, a clear mind allows for the ability to tolerate criticism, and ability of working together with others is maximized.”

On the other hand, Jill Nunes-Jensen thinks that it is slightly dangerous, and that a true “clearing” of the mind can only come after one has really committed themselves to the practice. That level of commitment requires the individual to constantly be vigilant and attentive to what they are doing, why they are doing it, what their bodies are telling them, and listening to the breath. “I don’t think the mind should really clear in yoga, just as I don’t think it should in dance. That line of thinking takes us really close to the mind/body split—something I believe to be a misperception,” says Nunes-Jensen. It is always interesting to get a completely different response from the normal, and it often offers another way to look at concepts.

In response to my question about how can clearing the mind be beneficial for a dancer, Tekla Kostek referenced the book, *Zen in the Art of Archery*. The story is about a man who



wanted to learn Zen and did this through the art of archery. It was a six-year commitment for him and in the end he was supposed to hit a target blindfolded. He was just supposed to quiet his mind, meditate, and visualize himself hitting that target blindfolded. And he did it. He did it because he pictured himself doing it and he quieted/cleared his mind. Kostek goes on to explain that there is so much thought and chatter going on in one's head, but that as dancers the tendency is to ignore much of it because the process is so analytical. She believes, however, that is actually healthy to have a good balance between the chatter and the quieting. Because, there are those times where you need to do things in a childlike state or just free state, and sometimes you get a better result.

Holly Johnston responded by stating that one of the things with which yoga can help is to keep the ego in check. That it helps to remind the artist that "yes, what you do is grand, but no more grand than the other individuals in the world pursuing what they do." She thinks that it is a nice equalizer, and it helps keep the artistic temperament at bay. Because it is so engaged in experimenting, the fluctuations of the mind inside the artist can be great...and very destabilizing. The mind wanders and explores and can be very confusing, and the principles inside yoga help us to align the mind. Johnston addresses the dancer directly: "I think then specifically for a dancer when the mind is cluttered, so is the body. When the mind is confused, so is the body. When the mind is hindered by distractions, so is the body. I have often seen that the more burdened the mind, the more burdened the body. The body does not operate with as much clarity. It must unburden itself before it can move forward and transform. Dancers are amazing and very complex people. But I find that some of the most amazing and powerful dancers have a very yogic approach to how they are."

Transitioning back into the physical aspects of yoga and away from the mental side, I want to consider the obvious benefits that yoga brings to the table. The primary aspects are gaining physical strength and flexibility. As a contemporary modern dancer I do not always work on my flexibility. I do get the chance to use the flexibility that I have in the exercises and technique, but I don't often spend time just stretching. Yoga is a place where I can get the benefit of gaining flexibility and strength simultaneously. This is precisely what a dancer needs in order to perform to their fullest potential and be safe in their bodies. Carol Rossi elucidated further that the dancer needs strength (clarity, the ability to know when to proceed versus back off, et cetera) and flexibility (being able to consider all options) of mind, not just body. This is an interesting idea to posit, although the rest of my interviewees stuck to strength and flexibility of the body and not the mind.

Jill Nunes-Jensen explains the danger in yoga—"I think that yoga can be quite dangerous if not done correctly. I don't think that yoga is an easier or safer version of dance in any way. In fact, I'd probably suggest that there are a lot of poses in yoga that a dancer might approach incorrectly—because of the dancer's desire to 'get it right'—and consequently not use their flexibility too safely." I completely agree with the fact that a dancer might approach yoga with the wrong attitude, but I also believe that under proper supervision by a trained teacher that these problems can hopefully be avoided.

In regards to strength and flexibility, Tekla Kostek believes one of the great things about yoga is that you are getting really warm. And that because in yoga there is the use of the breath, quieting of the mind, body awareness, and the process of doing poses and not dancing, it is easier to get stronger. She also believes that there are some dancers who have bodies that are not conducive to dance and that yoga might be beneficial for them. It might help them move safely

in their dance classes by helping to make their bodies more ready or willing to do the work that is asked of them. In general, Kostek says that for most dancers yoga is beneficial, but not always necessary.

Lastly, Holly Johnston explains how yoga postures take the body into extreme range inside the joints, but in order to have power and not deteriorate the joint you have to unify it with strength. This is exactly what we do in dance. She goes on to say that in dance if we are smart and safe we can create a body with incredible joint range, and with the power to sustain and manipulate that joint range; and with the capacity to keep the body sound and functional without it deteriorating. What we ultimately, she asserts, have is a body with limitless possibilities. She believes yoga can offer, metaphorically, what dance also offers to the body: the balance between strength and range of motion equating to limitless possibilities...and to the infinite gateways to transformation.

My concluding question was one of commitment. To be a dancer it takes an extreme amount of devotion. Similarly, the yoga practice requires an intense level of determination. Therefore my question to my five esteemed women was this: How can the aspects of yoga including determination and persistence be beneficial to the dancer and artist?

Carol Rossi explains that in the yoga language determination would be the intention, as Patanjali says, *eka tattva* – practice one thing. “Find your practice and stick to it.” She also notes that persistence is very important and that all dancers need patience and continued practice. “Keep rehearsing, keep working at the core issues of strength, flexibility, grace, in body and mind.”

Another perspective on yoga, dance, and determination was offered by Jill Nunes-Jensen. She notices that in ballet there is a pervasive misperception that we “know” how to do certain

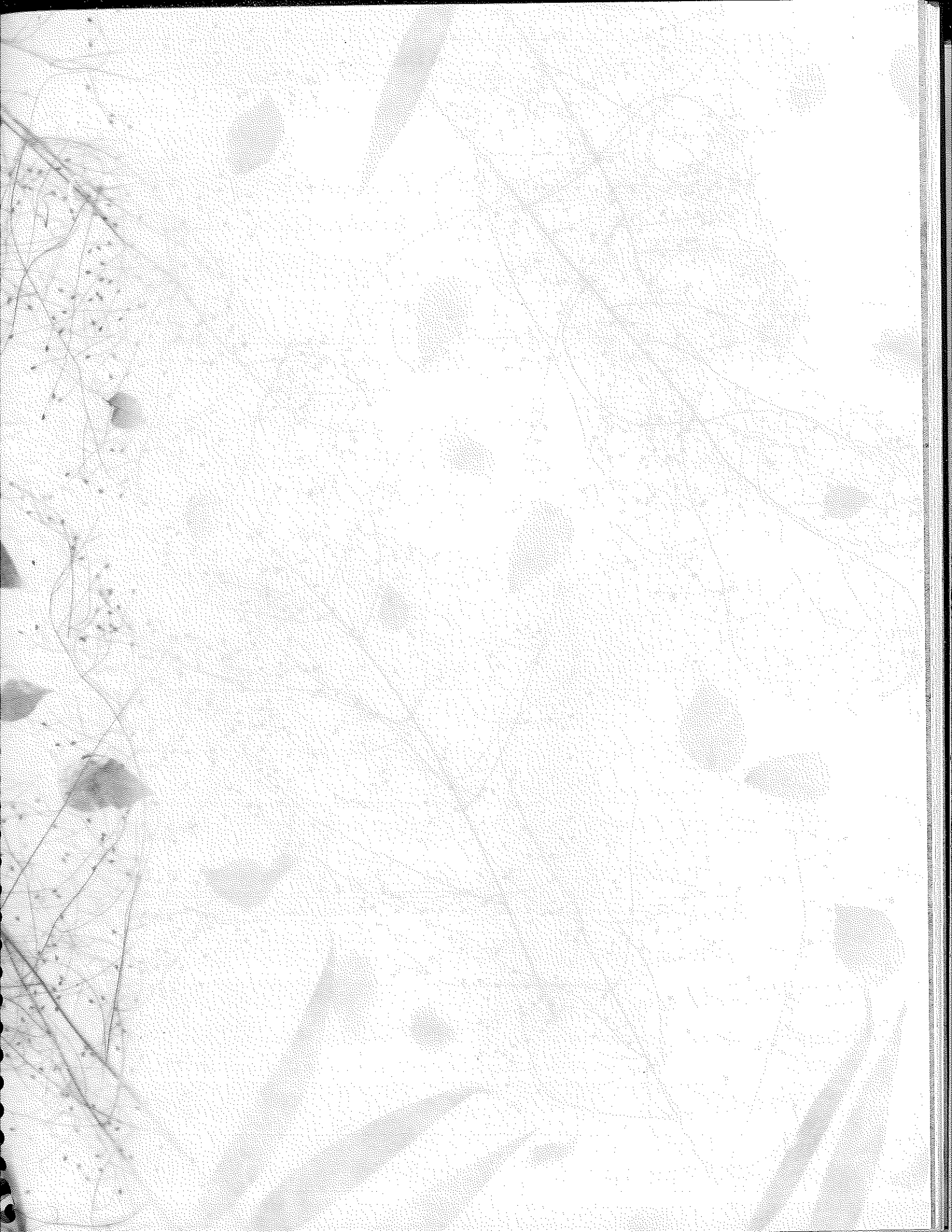


things—*plié, tendu, ronde de jambe*—but these things are never perfected and many dancers just repeat them daily without progressing. She thinks that injecting yogic philosophies would be helpful to many dancers and allow them to develop further rather than plateau. If you look closer at the practices themselves, she explains, you will find ballet much closer aligned with discipline and perfection, and yoga with cultivation and practice. I would take her idea farther. By aligning all the four ideas behind yoga and dance together (discipline, perfection, cultivation, and practice), I believe this results in the enchantment of an amazing artist. Tekla Kostek believes that yoga does cultivate that kind of determination naturally and inherently through the process of the class.

Holly Johnston reasons yoga's concepts of determination and persistence are beneficial to the dancer because "yoga is impossible, because yoga is straight impossible." She states that some of the asanas' sheer purpose is to encounter something that in our minds we perceive is not possible. It teaches us that if we engage practice, with consciousness, with awareness, and with a spirited belief in growth, what is revealed is that all things are possible. "It reveals the human spirit." She goes on to say that yoga reveals the human spirit, dancing reveals the human spirit-- it is the human being in striving toward excellence where we see the divine. Johnston thinks that that is what yoga accomplishes: It is in our desire to persevere through discomfort, to engage the body as a metaphor, to engage stress in strenuous situations and maintain the grace of staying calm and peaceful while retaining clarity. She states: "It is in those moments where we experience a connection to the divine, that thing, that magical place. I think that one of the things *so* beautiful about the relationship of yoga to dance is that many dancers engage dance and their art as a spiritual quest. Not only is it physical, but it is metaphysical, and it is a spiritual

quest for them, as is yoga. It is the same quest. It is the same union. And it uses many similar devices. There is a unified and parallel desire, and that is the liberated and free self.”

The use of breath, clarification of the mind, strength and flexibility, and determination and persistence are just a few of the concepts that yoga has to offer the dancer. Dancers who can thoughtfully and patiently and methodically integrate the aspects of yoga into their training have limitless possibilities to what they can become. Each of the five women are extraordinarily accomplished professionals; and each has successfully integrated the ideas of yoga into their work. It is remarkable how much you can learn by asking the right questions, and how much the right answers can influence your life. I believe that the yoga practice is a powerful phenomenon that can be life-changing. Not just for the dancer, performer, and artist, but for the entire population. If the power of yoga were to reside in each human being, the world as a whole would benefit from its magic.





# SECTION TWELVE



## INTERVIEW: CAROL ROSSI

CONDUCTED BY: REBECCA GREENBAUM

1. Can you provide a brief history of your yoga training and practice?

*C.R.~ "[this might be longer than you want but I just wrote it for my spiritual direction program so here it is . . .]*

I started studying yoga in 1991. The class was a very sweaty Bikram style practice taught by Baron Baptiste (no longer in LA, now famous for his own brand of Power Yoga), not at all "spiritual," which confused me because I'd always thought yoga was more meditative, but frankly if it hadn't been so active I wouldn't have stayed with it. But even with the odd approach, something unique was happening – I was having tremendous insights and realizations through the practice. It was two years before I ventured beyond that class to other yoga environments.

I studied with Ana Forrest, Erich Schiffmann, and other LA-area teachers from about 1993 to 96. It was 1994 before I discovered the lifestyle aspects of yoga (through Chris Chapple), and two years more before I found teachers who could help me explore the application of yoga philosophy to my particular circumstances.

In May 1996 I attended a series of workshops on yoga philosophy and therapy at a Yoga Works with Gary Kraftsow. The first day it was like my vision had expanded from tunnel to peripheral. It was clear that this was the yoga I needed – the tradition is sometimes called *viniyoga*, developed by a man named T. Krishnamacharya, a renowned yogi who lived to be 100 and his son T.K.V. Desikachar. The practice is comprehensive, with a focus on not only postures but breathing practices, meditation, chanting, study of classic texts, all applied as appropriate for the individual student. This was exactly what I sought – more than just poses. By the beginning of 1997 I'd found a different teacher, with whom I studied for five years, named Trish O'Rielly.

My work with Trish included teacher training and private consultation. I completed a two year teacher training with her in 2000. When we met privately, we'd discuss my practice, meaning postures, breathing, and meditation. There was an emphasis on problem solving: my practice changed with significant changes in my life. Over five years I probably had 4 or 5 different practices, which evolved depending on the particular situation. The most important element was the meditation practice. How could my practice support my life? Working with her I learned not only how to apply the practice to myself, but saw by the way she interacted with me how to work individually with others.

I studied the *Yoga Sutra* with a group that met at Chris Chapple's house for five years (1996-2001). I also studied Sanskrit for a year with Chris at LMU (1997-98). Sonia Nelson of the Vedic Chant Center was my chanting teacher from 1996 to 2003: we learned segments of various Upanishads and other ancient texts. I continued studying yoga therapy, sutras, asana with Gary Kraftsow from 1996 to 1998 at Yoga Works. I've completed most of the requirements for the Yoga Philosophy Program, including Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, and other courses, and have studied each of these extensively on my own.

Since 2002 I've practiced Contemplative Prayer with Dr. Jim Finley, who studied with Thomas Merton for several years. The meditation group meets twice a month and I work privately with Jim on my personal practice."

2. Did you ever dance and practice yoga at the same time? If yes, for how long and what differences did you see in your dancing while practicing yoga?

C.R.~ "Yes, I studied both yoga and dance from 1991 to 95. I don't know that I saw any qualitative differences in my dance as a result of the yoga because I wasn't very advanced at the yoga during that time and I wasn't dancing professionally but taking classes. I did, however, see a difference in the kind of dance I was interested in. Before the yoga I had studied ballet (1980-85 or so), modern (1990-93), dance-based aerobics (jazz, funk, hip hop - 1989-93), and West African traditional dance (Mali empire - 1991-95).

The more entrenched I became in the yoga the more I became interested in slower moving, more meditative forms like Javanese classical dance, which I studied only briefly at UCLA but it interested me very much. I would have been bored with this at an earlier point in my life."

3. If you have students who are dancers do you notice a difference in them in yoga class compared to those who don't dance?

C.R.~ "Yes, there's a definite difference. The dancers are much more attuned to their bodies, so not only are they more coordinated and able to quickly learn postures but the quality of their movement is qualitatively different than most other, non-dance major students. Their movement is more fluid, graceful, refined."

4. Under what circumstances would you recommend yoga practice to dancers and your students?

C.R.~ "It all depends on the situation with the particular dancer and the type of yoga. I don't think yoga is a cure-all for ailments and injuries, in fact it can create injuries when not practiced carefully or if the wrong yoga practice is done. I'm not inclined to tell everyone they should do yoga. I think there's an over-emphasis on the workout aspects of yoga and think dancers and non-dancers alike could benefit from more mindful approach, a focused, breath-based yoga practice, but most people just want to sweat.

The key is to be mindful, whether the practice is "easy" physically or more demanding. There's no point in just moving into complex poses to achieve the pose, the idea is to be present through the whole process. I think that provides a benefit for dancers because dance is usually about achieving the choreography but yoga is an internal process, not about performing something. It doesn't matter if the pose is "achieved" or not.

The term vinyasa is usually applied to Ashtanga Vinyasa practice but as you now know after working with Ramaswami it includes simple movements coordinated with breath that anyone can do. I think this kind of practice is often overlooked but can be very beneficial."



5. What are the general benefits of practicing yoga while being a dancer?

C.R.~ "I think a slower moving, more contemplative way of practicing can enhance anyone's (dancer or non) overall self-awareness, and especially awareness of movement in space, the use of breath with movement, and the ability to understand how to manipulate particular parts of the body (like flattening the various curves of the spine, for example) while moving into and out of postures.

Of course there are also of the lifestyle and meditative aspects of yoga that can enhance one's ability to interact with others in a more calm and peaceful manner, as well as allow one to maintain a high level of health overall. Sometimes, for example, people's desires change with serious yoga practice and that extra beer or cigarette suddenly holds less appeal. Since dancers are athletes and their bodies are their tools for expression, maintaining good health is vitally important."

6. How does the use of breath in yoga relate to the use of breath in dancing?

C.R.~ "Ah yes, the breath. I remember that I couldn't progress in ballet because I kept asking "how am I supposed to breathe?" and no teacher could tell me. They thought it was a weird question. The thing I loved most about modern dance was that I got to breathe! I love it when I'm watching dancers and I can hear them breathe.

Of course if one learns to breathe in yoga it can assist the breathing in dance. From my own experience, having gone from viniyoga back to Iyengar practice I can see that the Iyengar practice is more approachable partially because I've learned to breathe from the viniyoga/vinyasa approach."

7. How can yoga's ideas of clearing the mind be beneficial for a dancer?

C.R.~ "Again, yes, this is useful. I saw Merce Cunningham speak when he was at UCLA last year and a dance student asked him what he was thinking about when he danced and he said "of course I'm thinking about what I'm doing!" I don't actually think I'd say that "clearing the mind" is beneficial but "focusing the mind on one thing, the present" is the key. We live in the past and future most of the time and have a really hard time staying present. This is where the meditative aspect of yoga can be useful - to teach us to focus on one thing: the posture, the breath, the mantra, whatever.

Related I think is the element of yoga that has to do with humility and realizing the uselessness of trying to satisfy the ego. If the dancer is only thinking about what he/she looks like on stage instead of becoming the dance, it shows. You can see if someone is "performing" vs. "being."

8. Dance requires strength and flexibility. How does yoga help the dancer move with strength and flexibility as well as safety?

C.R.~ "The poses require/build both strength and flexibility so asanas can be a great tool for the dance to develop both elements. However, the dancer also needs strength (clarity, the ability to know when to proceed vs. back off, etc) and flexibility (being able to consider all options) of mind, not just body.

Again, the safety issue depends on the particular dancer – is that person doing the appropriate asana practice or just trying to sweat??"

9. Dancing takes determination and persistence. How does practicing yoga relate to this part of dancing?

C.R.~ "Well this is the whole thing. Like my friend used to say "that's why yoga is called a practice" because we have to practice is continually, both on and off the mat. It's a life-long effort towards abhyasa (practice) and viragya (dispassion). Can we stay patient with ourselves when we can't do the pose/keep our anger in check/breathe through a difficult negotiation/whatever the yoga practice is at the moment. Determination I think in yoga language would be the intention, as Patanjali says eka tattva – practice one thing. Find your practice and stick to it. Persistence, yes, again, we all need patience and continued practice.

Clearly it's the same issue for dance – keep rehearsing, keep working at the core issues of strength, flexibility, grace, in body and mind."

## **INTERVIEW: SARA MATA**

**CONDUCTED BY: REBECCA GREENBAUM**

1. Can you provide a brief history of your yoga training and practice?

S.M.~ "Actually I do have experience in dance. Between the years 1983- 1989 I was primarily a dancer studying everything ballet daily, jazz, modern, African and tap. I worked as a choreographer for a several small troupes- so I understand. I committed to yoga after chronic knee problems and eventual surgery directed me towards healing and mediation. It's a long story so I will stick to your questions.

Beginning meditation and yoga in 1974 Transcendental meditation- or TM and integral yoga- swami satchitananda, the list of yoga follows from then to the present with notable highlights of influence from Gary Kraftsow TKV Desikachar's (Krishnamacharya's son) senior teacher, studied with TK V himself since 1919- 2001- his son , also Patabhi Jois since 1989 , I also subjected myself to many Iyengar teacher's- all of this list is long and maybe irrelevant- except to say I have been studying with increasing passion since 1974 and teaching since 1985."

2. If you have any students who dance, do you notice a difference in their yoga practice as opposed to those who don't dance?

S.M.~ "Students who dance usually have better sense of learning movement patterns, better alignment awareness, better discipline, less self conscious, more nuance sense of the movement."

3. Under what circumstances would you recommend yoga to dancers?

S.M.~ "I would recommend yoga to all dancers as a way to take care of themselves and to prevent injuries and increase the duration of their performing life."

4. What might be the general benefits of practicing yoga while being a dancer?

S.M.~ "General benefits are the care of the instrument, and the development of the spirit to work at your peak without injury."

5. How can yoga's ideas of using the breath and pranayama help a dancer?

S.M.~ "Breath/ pranayama help to develop a moment to moment awareness (so as not to rush or push a moment) as well as to open the body to the maximum."

6. How can yoga's ideas of clarification of the mind be beneficial to a dancer?

S.M.~ "Clarification of mind is useful so as the sense of timing is correct, so the spatial awareness is Unswerving, and the ability to tolerate criticism, and working together with others is maximized."



7. Dance requires strength and flexibility. How does yoga help the dancer move with strength and flexibility as well as safety?

S.M.~ "Strength/flexibility/ safety- Yoga is a complete and balanced system of training for all of these elements, vinyasana- krama develops strength through movement and then holding the posture. These are different kinds of strength (movement as opposed to holding) the steady cultivation of the breath insures the ability of the body to gradually tolerate progressive demands, and to be more sensitive to one's limits while expanding them."

8. Dancing takes a lot of determination and persistence. How does practicing yoga relate to this part of dancing?

S.M.~ "Determination and persistence are qualities of good spirit as well as good work habits that intrinsic to a true yoga experience. These are learned by way of a dawning sense of one's deeper identity that is freed from the natural obstacles doubt, insecurity, and fear. In yoga these obstacles are known as kleshas they afflictions that we all struggle against that obstruct our better selves let alone our best performance. Kleshas make us difficult to work with because of lack of self-confidence or the other extreme- to quick to become angry, impatient or defensive. Obviously this is a life- long work."

## INTERVIEW: JILL NUNES-JENSEN

CONDUCTED BY: REBECCA GREENBAUM

1. Can you provide a brief history of your yoga training and practice?

J.N.~ "I have been practicing yoga for two and half years on a regular basis (at least three times a week, but oftentimes as much as five). I take classes that have a strong sense of flow, rather than Iyengar or Ashtanga Mysore. I've never done "power" yoga or Kundalini—the former does not appeal to me and the later is too meditative for me, I like to move. I have been dancing for 24 years, specializing in ballet, but with limited experience in classical modern (from Donald McKayle and former Graham dancers), Limon, contact improvisation, tap, jazz and tango."

2. How long have you been practicing yoga and dancing at the same time?

J.N.~ "2.5 years"

3. What differences have you seen in your dancing while practicing yoga?

J.N.~ "I truly believe that I have become a much better dancer because of my yoga practice and interest. I notice that I now ALLOW myself to move in ways that make dancing easier, freer and more enjoyable. Those were things trained out of me during years of intense ballet training—ballet does not teach you how to move as much as it teaches the body and mind to mimic, hit poses, balance, hide effort, and maintain constant composure. Practicing yoga, I've allowed by body the chance to be off-balance, to struggle, to show effort, and to breathe—these things all seem to contrast ballet, yet they can actually enhance your dancing if you use them to find insights into your dancing. I personally can see and feel that having had this new movement experience (yoga), my body is less tense during ballet and able to perform movements (both technically and visually) in a manner that is more exciting to watch and do."

4. How does having experience in yoga help you to teach dance?

J.N.~ "Having experience in yoga has enabled me to be more articulate while teaching dance studio classes; yoga instructors talk much more than ballet teachers and that is something worthwhile to incorporate into the dance studio. It has also helped me to provide more appropriate analogies about the body, so that a wider range of students can access what I am speaking about or the ideal that I am trying to posit."

5. Do you notice a difference in your students who practice yoga as opposed to those who don't?

J.N.~ "I can't say—most students do not say whether or not they are doing yoga in a ballet class setting. I also think that most college age students do not have the time/interest to commitment to cultivating a serious yoga practice; this is not to say that they cannot do it, but rather that it does not seem to hold as much interest for youth."

6. Under what circumstances would you recommend yoga to dancers and your students?

J.N.~ "Any. I do not see how yoga could be harmful for dancers. At the same time, I do not think of yoga as a substitute for dancing, but as a way to augment."

7. What are the general benefits of practicing yoga while being a dancer?

J.N.~ "In my opinion there are enormous benefits. It sounds cliché, but yoga can save your life as a dancer. Learning a new movement practice can provide so much insight to how you work/want to work/should work/don't like to work with your body. Practicing yoga can teach you to find center without relying on the mirror, it can help you to find your true alignment (not tucking or twisting to make yourself look like the teacher or the dancer in front of you) and it can allow you to move in ways that have been trained out of western classical dance (i.e. squatting, which is a very important posture as it releases the spine from the curvature that we force it into while sitting in chairs all day)."

8. How does the use of breath in dance relate to the use of breath in yoga?

J.N.~ "MAJOR DIFFERENCE. I'm still trying to learn how to breathe as I've spent my entire life hiding my efforts in ballet and now I'm supposed to let everyone in the yoga class know when I'm exerting myself through my breath. I think it is perhaps the most difficult thing to transition for a dancer, yet it is not just dancers who have trouble breathing. In fact, a very well known Santa Monica yoga teacher said that if he could teach three things to his students the first would be breath."

9. How can yoga's ideas of clearing the mind be beneficial to a dancer?

J.N.~ "I was talking over the weekend with a colleague of mine who has done yoga for years and is from India. She pointed out to me how yoga in India is very much about sacrifice, cultivating the body, celibacy, deprivation and discipline. It is an individual practice of the highest regard—akin to a religion. In America, especially Los Angeles, yoga has become a social activity—a place where everyone is welcome, a community, and a space where you don't have to think about things. I think that is slightly dangerous, for I believe that a true "clearing" of the mind can only come after one has really committed themselves to the practice and that that level of commitment requires the individual to constantly be vigilant and attentive to what they are doing, why they are doing it, what their bodies are telling them, and listening to the breath. In other words, I don't think the mind should really clear in yoga, just as I don't think it should in dance. That line of thinking takes us really close to the mind/body split—something I believe to be a misperception."

10. Dance requires strength and flexibility. How does yoga help the dancer move with strength and flexibility as well as safety?



J.N.~ “Not sure I agree with this line of questioning. I think that yoga can be quite dangerous (I’m thinking handstands, plow, should stand) if not done correctly. I don’t think that yoga is an easier or safer version of dance in any way, in fact, I’d probably suggest that there are a lot of poses in yoga that a dancer might approach incorrectly—because of the dancer’s desire to “get it right”—and consequently not use their flexibility too safely.

11. Dancing takes a lot of determination and persistence. How does practicing yoga relate to this part of dancing?

J.N.~ “I think this one is obvious. Yoga is referred to as a “practice;” this is to say, there is not an end result, it is not a product-based approach to movement. There are no performances, no yoga recitals, no yoga picture day—all of those things that have become part and parcel of the young dancer’s training in a studio. These things have also combined to make ballet something that can be learned and mastered and that is not the sense with yoga. In other words, in ballet there is a pervading misperception that we “known” how to do certain things—*plié*, *tendu*, *ronde de jambe*—but these things are never perfected and many dancers just repeat them daily without progressing. I think that interjecting yogic philosophies would be helpful to many dancers and allow them to develop instead of plateau. So, in theory yoga and ballet might SEEM to both be about determination and persistence, but I think that if you look closer at the practices themselves, you will find ballet much closer aligned with discipline and perfection and yoga with cultivation and practice. These are crucial differences you should address, it will make your work much more informed and also disavow generalizations.”

## INTERVIEW: TEKLA KOSTEK

CONDUCTED BY: REBECCA GREENBAUM

1. Can you provide a brief history of your yoga training and practice?

T.K.~ "In 1998 I started doing yoga twice a week and it was kundalini yoga. I did it for about six months and I enjoyed but at the same time being a dancer I thought it may not be helping and thought maybe I need to be doing something more physical instead of something that required meditation and breath. Being a dancer and being really fast paced I wanted to do, do, do all the time. Actually the act of meditating and breathing was really difficult. At first it was like I can't do it I can't sit still. And that was the first thing I shied away from so I stopped doing it. Then it wasn't until I came out here in 2001 and didn't have a job and nothing really to do with my time. I was a little depressed because I wasn't moving, so I ended up taking some yoga classes and I immediately feel in love with it. Of course the yoga that I do gravitate to is a flow class because it is a little more moving and being a dancer I really enjoy that. I did that for about a year. Then after that I decided that I would take more of a restorative class, and it was really difficult. I try to do it once a week if I am good. SO, I have pretty much been practicing since about 2001. I don't go all the time but definitely when I do go I feel a thousand times better."

2. How long have you been practicing yoga and dancing at the same time?

T.K.~ "Since 2001 so about three years."

3. What differences have you seen in your dancing while practicing yoga?

Definitely stamina. I wish that as a dancer and in my earlier training I were taught how to breathe. The aspect of your breath alone and using that for your movement. I danced with this one company The Los Angeles Chamber Ballet and the first year I did that I wasn't doing yoga that often and it was really hard to do a 30-minute piece, I could barely get through it. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> season with them I was doing a lot of yoga. When we did that 30-minute piece that I was feature in quite a lot it was like a breeze. The endurance and stamina alone through the breath. IN yoga I have definitely gained a lot more muscular strength. Yoga just really helped with how I was breathing and using my breath on the stage experience."

4. How does having experience in yoga help you to teach dance?

T.K.~ "It really helps me a lot. I'm not very good with kinesiology and what every exact muscle and bone is, but I do have a very good eye. I found that while practicing yoga it goes hand in hand in regards to ballet technique. I find that a lot of the aspects of yoga in regards to alignment are quite similar to ballet. Once I had a deeper understanding of what was going on in my body during the yoga practice I found that it was easier to communicate to my students what was going on in ballet. It is quite similar in regards to squaring off the hips and the use of the inner thigh. Also in regards to any kind of cambre or back bend. All the back bends in yoga are about lengthening up as opposed to crunching down in your spine. All of that is exactly what ballet technique is. We don't necessarily do in ballet because it's difficult. Usually in ballet the

dancer would crunch the lower just to do it and do it in more of a painful kind of way just to get the look. With an extensive yoga practice and learning what is supposed to be going on in the body during yoga and not just going through the positions haphazardly, it's the same technique. So it absolutely helps tremendously.

5. Do you notice a difference in your students who practice yoga as opposed to those who don't?
6. Under what circumstances would you recommend yoga to dancers and your students?

T.K.~ "I'm not necessarily sure there has to be circumstances. I think it would be great for any dance student to take yoga."

R.G.~ Would you recommend it to somebody who had emotional problems?

T.K.~ "yes."

R.G.~ What about someone with postural tendencies?"

T.K.~ "I think that if you are going into yoga and you do know that you have some physical problems I think you have to be very careful and I think that you have to know your body and know your limits. I think yoga has become quite popular and because of this people want to do it just to do it, and just push through it with power yoga. I think that sometimes we don't realize the fact that you don't have to do all the poses, and that it isn't something that is competition based. If you're going into your body and really listening to yourself and you do have any kind of physical ailment and it's not detrimental to that then I think its fine. I think it all depends on the individual."

R.G.~ "what about somebody with an injury?"

T.K.~ "If they are health enough and honest enough with themselves, I think they can answer that for themselves. They would also have to be in a class where they knew the teacher. It just wouldn't make sense to go and do just to do it and you are re-injuring yourself doing yoga because it is physical. You do have to be careful you are moving quiet physically. You have to know your restrictions and limitations and work through that. If you can to that point where you are working through that in a healthy manner and can be even more beneficial. You are dealing with the mind, spirit and body all three together, as opposed to just getting physical therapy and thinking about the body and not the mind or the spirit."

7. What are the general benefits of practicing yoga while being a dancer?

T.K.~ " I definitely think stamina and the use of the breath. I wish in dance classes and dance programs it was more stressed. I think it is probably cultural because we are living in the western society where everything is do, do, do or go, go, go - do more, challenge yourself. We try and push ourselves and keep going as dancers and no one tells us to breathe. It's not asked can you do this while you are breathing or in a relaxed state, as opposed to being constantly busy. It also helps with sheer strength. For me alone I have quite strong lower body strength and no upper body strength, but I feel like that evens out a little more the more I do yoga. Yoga is a quite well rounded exercise where its not just giving cardio or something very specific. SO strength is one thing and flexibility. For dancers that is three very important things especially in dance where you have that very fine line of stretch and strength that you have to get your body equal. You can't just have one or the other. In yoga it's the same thing you can't just be flexible and you can't just be strong in order to master it or to master you art of dancing."



8. How does the use of breath in dance relate to the use of breath in yoga?

T.K.~ "I think that they should be quite similar. I think that when one is performing there should be that sense of the breath kind of getting you through the movement or using the breath along with the movement. I don't think that is stressed enough in dancing. I think the tendency when you are dancing or doing a show is to take in air and not to expel that air. Also in a performance situation where there is a lot of nervous energy and there is a lot of mental issues that you are facing and dealing with in performing, that using the breath is even that much more important, and it is not stressed enough. I'm not saying that when you are dancing you should be using this yoga breath. But I really do think that you have to know and learn when you are dancing on stage and in class when you can exhale really deeply. Even an exaggerated exhale is important because it rejuvenates so much. And also to you are not dancing with all of that tension. You have more stamina and the experience is also more pleasant.

9. How can yoga's ideas of clearing the mind be beneficial to a dancer?

T.K.~ "I think it's also a part of a cultural thing again with having all of these quick options, that it is almost easier for us to schedule our way through our lives. Sometimes when you have that down time you don't know what to do and you almost go into a panic, and I think that get reflected into how we teach art. I don't necessarily think that is a good way to teach art. Yes, it is important to do and have sheer repetition, but I don't think that it's the only way. I read this book called *Zen in the Art of Archery* and it was this one guys account of Buddhism and he went to Japan to learn Zen. They told him if he wanted to learn Zen he had to learn an art. That he couldn't just learn Zen by going in and taking notes as a westerner, but he had to learn an art like dancing, or flower arranging, or archery. He chose archery, and it was really interesting because it was a six-year program that he was on to master archery, and for the first year of that program he didn't even pick up the bow because he had to learn how to breathe. SO, I think that through the breath and through almost spiritual experience you can reach really heightened artistic experience as opposed to just going through with this really busy attitude of learning your art. Going back to that book, after those six years were up, one of his last ceremonies he had to do was to shoot the bow and hit the target blind folded. Part of what they did for that was, six months prior to the ceremony he wasn't even allowed to touch the bow. He was just supposed to quiet his mind, meditate, and visualize himself hitting that target blindfolded. That day the event was taking place he felt so confident and even excited with no nervous energy what so ever to do this event, because he had seen himself, visualized, and was in such a state of clarity that he was going to shoot it. It was almost a relief to go through and do and he did it perfectly. I think it draws on that same idea of having that mental clarity which we don't necessarily bring to all the time. There is so much thought and chatter going on in your head that we do enjoy more often or not because dancers are so analytical in our approach. But at the same time I think it is good to have a healthy balance between both because there are those times where you need to do things in a child like state or just free state, and sometimes you get a better result."

10. Dance requires strength and flexibility. How does yoga help the dancer move with strength and flexibility as well as safety?

T.K.~ "I think one of the great things about yoga is that you are getting really warm. I think the whole format of the yoga is really great, because you start the yoga class by clearing your mind and your focusing on your breath. Then you move through this series of postures that gets you really warm and a lot of it is based on structure and alignment of the poses. Just that alone helps the dancer think that maybe they should follow that same sequence in their dance classes. Where in dance classes you don't want to go into class with all of these things running around in your head, you do want to take that time before going into class to quiet your mind. You want to make that change and make that shift because it is your art, and art is creating, and creating is something spiritual at least for me. I think that yoga really helps to teach that if the dancer takes it over into their dance classes so you get that spiritual side of what you are doing. Also, because there is such a great stress on alignment and making sure that you hips are square, and you are using the resistance on the floor and you are lengthening through the spine, that is just follows through in your dance classes as well. I think that it is really beneficial if there is someone who has a weakness in a certain area in their body, maybe there abdominals or their hamstrings are weak. I think that sometimes it is really hard in a dance class to get those areas strong just in a dance class alone. There are so many different elements that you are faced with and you want to get through the work and you want to get through the material, and there is a lot of mental thought in there that might not necessarily get your abdominals stronger. I think that in yoga that because there is this use of the breath, quieting of the mind, and body awareness, and because you are doing poses and not dancing that it is easier to get stronger. Sometimes all it really takes in your dance classes to get through that one hard step because your abdominals are weak, is to go to yoga. Then when you come back to your dance class those steps that did seem difficult, no longer seem difficult anymore because your body is healthier and more in balance with everything else. ME: "do you think that it helps you move safer and the in pathways that a dancer would choose?" T.K.~ "I think that really depends on the individual. I think there are those individuals in yoga class who don't even move safely. For those who are willing to recognize their body and recognize what's going on it may be beneficial. I'm not necessarily sure that it is safer. It really depends. I am coming from a ballet point of view and there are some girls who are just naturally born with this great body that is conducive to their art and because of that they are not going to get injured because it makes sense to their body. That's not necessarily always the case because there are some dancers who have bodies that aren't conducive to dance and yoga might be beneficial to them. It might help them move safely in their dance classes because their bodies might not be ready or willing to do the work that is asked of them. Now, I am definitely speaking from a ballet point of view, and I am not speaking from a modern dance point of view. I don't really know in regards to yoga, and for me I can't talk like that because I do have this crazy range of mobility in my dancing so the risk factor for me isn't that hard. I not doing very high impact work like what you see in tongue but if I did I would probably injure myself a little bit. My body's not conducive to that work. The issue is what are your body's limitations what form of dancing should you be doing, and then in that case what you do end up choosing, would yoga help? Yes, maybe for some, but other I'm not quite so sure. ME: "If you were going to take a class with Tongue would you be happy that you have experience in yoga or that their warm up included some yoga?" T.K.~ "Yeah, I would if I were to do that kind of experience, because the work is quite physical and it does require a lot of upper body strength. I do think that yoga provides that, and that most dancing technique doesn't necessarily provide that. That is probably why Tongue does that in their warm up, because it

does help them in their movement that they are doing and it makes sense. For most dancers I do think that yoga is beneficial in that regard, but not necessary maybe.

11. Dancing takes a lot of determination and persistence. How does practicing yoga relate to this part of dancing?

T.K.~ "It's interesting because the yoga teacher that I take from is pretty much like a I shouldn't say a yoga nazi, but to a certain extent I have learned a lot from him. He is very diligent on what should be happening in the body. The fingers should be here and not here, and if someone in the class is not here then we all have to wait until everyone gets there at the same point in time. It might be difficult to hold that pose for a long time, and I do find that in my yoga practice my mind does get cloudy sometimes. When you're in this really long downward dog position and the first week maybe after coming back from a holiday or something, you might be thinking I know this is yoga and I shouldn't be thinking about this but I really can't do this anymore. But you can't move unless your body is in pain and you need to sit in child's pose and that's fine. That alone right there, that example of staying in those poses when you do have that mental thought that runs through your head of 'oh my gosh this is really difficult', that you are reminded from the instructor and from all of the people in the class, that you have this energy where it is determination. You can go back to the breath. You have the experience of this is difficult right now, but it is giving you that kind of discipline and determination right there to go and to finish that downward dog as opposed to sit in child's pose. Also too you see this progression week after week after week that maybe that first downward dog after vacation was difficult, but the next yoga class that you get into it's not as difficult anymore. And then you realize you are not having those kind of thoughts that are running through your head about how it is difficult. So, I do think that that helps with the determination, which is definitely needed in a dancer and the dance world now. Especially because there are so many out of work dancers who are absolutely beautiful and go out for jobs and are against all these beautiful people who have great technique and everything else, and if there is a lack of determination or will you might not necessarily get that job that you want to get. I think that yoga does cultivate that kind of determination just naturally and inherently through that process of the class. Especially after a longer period of time I think you notice it more and I think you have a little more reflection on that.



## INTERVIEW: HOLLY JOHNSTON

CONDUCTED BY: REBECCA GREENBAUM

1. Can you provide a brief history of your yoga training and practice?

H.J.~ "I started yoga with Stephanie just as an initial idea, exploring the principles of Ashtanga. Then I started to take class with Wendy Samuels who is certified in Astanga. Then I started to work with Tim Miller who was the first Astanga yogi in America to be certified by Pattabhi Jois. I did about a year regularly of Astanga yoga practice with Chuck Miller, who is over at yoga works in Santa Monica. It was about in 1998 when I started. From then it's been influences of several teachers, and reading, and just engaged in the practice and those foundational ideas from those people."

2. How long have you been practicing yoga and dancing at the same time?

H.J.~ "I have been dancing since 1992, and started practicing yoga in 1998. So I started doing the two of those in 1998."

3. What differences have you seen in your dancing while practicing yoga?

H.J.~ "I think that there's a greater sensitivity to the actual physical self as well as the subtle self. I think that there's been improvement in terms of just balance and stability. I think it's a place where I find practicing the principles of alignment to be more effective, and done in a place that's much more internal, and individualized and much more personal to myself. I feel like what yoga has done is help me truly sort of feel my own body. I feel like I have gotten benefits in terms of improvement in elasticity in range of motion. I feel like I have improved circulation in greater intelligence, in terms of being engaged in rigor in my body and not losing my mind, but retaining a sense of calm and discipline, and focus. I think that yoga has helped me become more disciplined and have a greater desire for rigor. It has helped my capacity for breathing."

4. How does having experience in yoga help you to teach dance?

H.J.~ "I think one of the greatest things it helps me with is to see the landscape of the human being rather than just the body. I feel like with a more yogic or a more yoga based philosophy in approaching the dancers that you can see more clearly into their nervous system, and their level of understanding inside themselves. I feel like then as a teacher you can help them understand the root of their habit, and help them discover a deeper layer into themselves that will ultimately help them find their own internal guide into improving themselves. Which I think that yoga is really meant to do, is to really guide the individual in their own individual experience having leadership and ownership, and dominion over the destiny of your life. I think that that is what I try to use and employ as a teacher, as a device, is that ultimately the dancer and the human inside the body have dominion over itself. I feel like when those connections are made then whatever the physical task is, is just a physical task in which you can grow in to. So, I'd like to employ that philosophy and also just the sound principles of alignment, and balance between muscular energy and ease, so that there's the stability created with the unity of these

two ideas. That's what dancers struggle to find, is the balance between the two. Often times we come in with bodies that have tendencies towards being either stronger or more flexible, and often times we are dominated by those ideas. I think that yoga and the principles of yoga help us to unify them so that ultimately what we have is a stronger more powerful body, greater and more functional."

5. Do you notice a difference in your students who practice yoga as opposed to those who don't?

H.J.~ "Yes. I think that the students who practice yoga engage their physical bodies with a deeper level of awareness. I find them often times to have a deeper level or greater sense of concentration. I find that what their intent in the investigation is often times different than the intent of other people who have not experienced yoga. I think they have a greater flow of unifying the observer, sort of what Tim Miller described as the dispassionate observer. I think that students who engage yoga are more readily able to engage the dispassionate observer than those who don't practice yoga. So often time just a greater involvement emotionally in the physical practice, than needs to be or that is effective. I think that those people who practice yoga work on the discipline of the dispassionate observer. So, I think it can lend itself to a freer exploration."

6. Under what circumstances would you recommend yoga to dancers and your students?

H.J.~ "I think all dancers, all people, Yoga all the time! I think the only caution would be to make sure that you are under the watchful eyes of a really skillful teacher. I truly think that yoga for all humans is enormously beneficial even if not done with a trained guru. I think that there is something extraordinary about the union of linking breathing to moving. All human beings, and all dancers at any level, at any physical age can benefit from. So, I think under all circumstances.

R.G.~ "So people with emotional problems, or physical postural tendencies.

H.J.~ "I think if you are perfectly healthy with nothing going on that you can benefit from doing yoga. I think that if you are deformed with things that people claim can never be transformed, that you should do yoga. Because I think that there are the transformative properties of both the science and art of yoga and in the mixture of those two elements you have magic. I think that anybody anywhere under any circumstances can create the environment and create the possibility for a little bit of magic to show up. I think that yoga is the beautiful place in which that can occur. So, I think that especially if you have physical issues, especially if you have emotional issues, especially if you have psychological imbalance—yoga is the place that you can come with all of those things, that is intended to be criticism free, it is intended to engage transformation and possibility. So, I think that, that's the grace that yoga is. So, I would encourage those people to do it, because yoga is so universal. Anybody, anywhere, anytime.

7. What are the general benefits of practicing yoga while being a dancer?

H.J.~ "There are so many just physical benefits of helping to correct the imbalances of working in choreographic process. Choreography is so often repetitious and on one side, and choreography is not about balance, it's about accomplishing the work. So, yoga while doing a

dance or choreographic process can offer you and restore a balance that you are not able to achieve while you are engaged in your choreographic process. I think that yoga is a place that while you are dancing gives you a home inside your body that's not about always producing performance results. It is a place for you to return to that creates a ritual and a sanctuary for you to occupy that is not about results but is about being engaged in the presence of the moment. I think that for dancers that's really important, because we struggle so much with our ambition and our ego. The drive of what we do that I think that yoga can offer us a place to stop that. To just stop, to have pause, and to return to yourself as a human being – not as an artist, not as these defined other entities, but just as a human being engaged in the world and engaged in living. Because dancers have the unique challenge of never getting to leave their work, never getting to leave their art, never getting to leave any of those things because you are trapped inside your body. It is the gift that you are inside your body, but it's difficult to escape, you can't leave it. I think that yoga is the place where you can actually be in your body, but leave some of the extraneous obstacles and hindrances behind and actually feel for a moment what it is like to just be without any other definition. Just be."

8. How does the use of breath in dance relate to the use of breath in yoga?

H.J.~ "I think that they are very much aligned. I think that the principles of breathing from the yoga point of view is so universal that I think that those principles very much apply everywhere in any form, and anytime when the body is alive. I think the coordination of inhale with expansion and the coordination of exhale with release is very uniform and very parallel to the principles used in contemporary dance. And I think many forms of dance we often times use the inhale to create space, to expand the joints, to then exhale to create greater possibility for contraction, release. The even flow of in hale and exhale creates a dynamic action inside the torso and inside the spine, which is something that we investigate very often, especially in contemporary dance, is the expansion and contraction of the spine. So, when we use those breathing principles it makes those possibilities inside the movement language even more vast. So, I think that the principles are very aligned."

9. How can yoga's ideas of clearing the mind be beneficial to a dancer?

H.J.~ "I think its so supremely beneficial to a dancer and even specifically to artists as a distinction in the populist. I think specifically for an artist, the discipline of clearing the mind, because so often we are engrossed in our own invention, we are engrossed in our own world, and I think the discipline to become broader in our scope, to find the time and place for our art, so that narcissism and ego don't over run us. Because as an artist it is thoroughly appropriate at times to be so narcissistic in your own vision, because that's what it takes as an artist to develop, is to investigate the self, which are not necessarily the principles of yoga in the same way. Dance is meant for us to have a performance experience, where the ego can get aggrandized, and I think that that's one of the things that yoga can help us with is that it keeps the ego in check. To remind the artist that yes, what you do is grand, but no more grand than the other individuals in the world pursuing what they do. I think that it is a nice equalizer, and it helps keep the artistic temperament at bay. The fluctuations of the mind inside the artist because it is so engaged in experimenting can be great, and very destabilizing. The mind wanders and explores and can be very confusing, and I think the principles inside yoga help us to align the mind. So



that no, we don't limit then the experiment, but we are calm inside of it. We don't need to be swept away by any drama in it, that the mind can sustain itself, and maintain its state of grace in the exploration. I think then specifically for a dancer when the mind is cluttered, so is the body. When the mind is confused, so is the body. When the mind is hindered by distractions, so is the body. I have often seen that the more burdened the mind, the more burdened the body. The body does not operate with as much clarity. It must unburden itself before it can move forward and transform. So, for a dancer it becomes almost essential to know how to be in relationship with your own mind, and your own spirit, and your own self, because it impacts the results of your art, which resides in your body. I feel like the stronger and more powerful the relationship and the union between those two things the greater clarity you have inside your instrument. So, I find that it is a really essential principle for the dancer, because it impacts how you speak inside your body and with your body. Dancers are amazing and very complex people, but I find that some of the most amazing and powerful dancers have a very yogic approach to how they are. Driven and complicated with ambition and ego, yes, but I think that if we could examine many artists doing what they do and find a steadfast meditation in how they operate in their life. I think that dancers that are able to do that are just happier. I think the maybe suffer less. SO, I think it's really, really cool."

10. Dance requires strength and flexibility. How does yoga help the dancer move with strength and flexibility as well as safety?

H.J.~ "I think again all of the foundational principles offered by many different forms of yoga: Anusara, Iyengar, and Vinyasa yoga, are yoga practices that really focus on alignment, and because the yoga postures take the body into extreme range inside the joints, but in order to have power and not deteriorate the joint you have to unify it with strength to support the joint, which is exactly what we do in dance. So, I think that those principles are essentially the same because they serve the same metaphor. The more range you have and the power to sustain the concentration and discipline in power in that range, the more fulfilled the human being you are, and the greater the possibilities. So, the same with dance, we create a body that has incredible joint range and has power to sustain that joint range and to manipulate it and keep it sound and functional without deteriorating it, what we have is a body with limitless possibilities. As an artist, as a physical creature, the language it can speak, we can take it into many experiments and be powerful inside them. If we have a body that is dominated by one idea verses the other we diminish the amount of power and perhaps longevity that is in that action. So, I think that's what yoga metaphorically can also offer that dance also offers to the body, is the balance between strength and range of motion equating to limitless possibilities, equating to the infinity of gateways to transformation."

11. Dancing takes a lot of determination and persistence. How does practicing yoga relate to this part of dancing?

H.J.~ "Because yoga is impossible, because yoga is straight impossible. Some of the asanas, I believe the sheer purpose is to encounter something that in our minds we perceive is not possible. What we know about the way that things work, its not possible. So, it teaches us that if

we engage practice, with consciousness, with awareness, and with a spirited belief in growth, what gets revealed is that all things are possible. All things are possible if we engage our lives with heart, with passion, with discipline, with consistency, with clarity, that what we see is that we transform perception. The perception that we walked in with and said that this is not possible. And that we engaged a practice with those properties and what got revealed is that they were possible, because in a moment that you could not accomplish something, that weeks or years or months or however long it takes that you can stand and realize that you can accomplish it and it was possible. For me, it's revealing the human spirit. It reveals the human spirit. Yoga reveals the human spirit, dancing reveals the human spirit. It is the human being in striving towards excellence where we see the divine. I think that that's what yoga does, is in our desire to persevere through discomfort to engage the body as a metaphor, to engage stress in strenuous situations and maintain the grace of staying calm and peaceful and retaining clarity. It is in those moments where we experience a connection to the divine, that thing, that magical place. With dancing it is very similar, you can work and dance and engage a process in class or in rehearsal, and reach that same level of clarity inside your body, and feel for a moment that you connected into a place that is bigger and greater than just yourself. It is a connection into a magical and divine place. I think that one of the things that is so beautiful about the relationship of yoga to dance is, many dancers engage dance and their art as a spiritual quest, not only is it physical, but it is metaphysical, and it is a spiritual quest for them, as is yoga. For the practitioners of yoga, it is a physical, metaphysical, and spiritual transformation that comes, that is desired, that is practiced and it is the same inside dance and dance art. That is the same quest, it is the same union and it is the uses of many similar devices, because there is such a unified and parallel desire, and that is the liberated and free self."

