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## Earth and Sky or Bone and Skin: Reflections on Earth and Body Connectivity

Elizabeth Snyder

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**DANC 461: Senior Thesis Project**

**EARTH AND SKY OR BONE AND SKIN:**  
Reflections on Earth and Body Connectivity

Elizabeth S. Snyder

Mentors:  
Professor Judy Scalin  
Professor Kristen Smiarowski

In partial fulfillment of  
The Bachelor of Arts Degree in Dance  
Loyola Marymount University  
May 9, 2019

**EARTH AND SKY OR BONE AND SKIN:**  
Reflections on Earth and Body Connectivity

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By: Elizabeth S. Snyder

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**Earth and Sky or Bone and Skin: Reflections on Earth and Body Connectivity** is a thesis primarily based in research. It was my goal to combine my two passions and areas of study, Dance and Environmental Studies. I wanted to find common ground between the subjects, and connect dancers to the environmental world. So I researched the systems of the human body and their connections to the systems of the earth. As I was exploring these ideas I was continually inspired, and so a journaling process began. From here my thesis turned into a series of reflections on these human and earthly connections. I then began to supplement my thoughts with images, quotes, and academic texts that aided in my understanding of these ideas. What took shape was a two-columned finished product, with my ideas on one side and the evidence to support them on the other.

My research involved mainly secondary sources, accounting how humans and earthly systems functioned. I found scientific, philosophical, religious, and environmental sources to support my ideas. In addition, I used sources from the field of dance, viewing artistic works choreographed by the environmentally minded. These works were critical sources in finding connections between dancers and the natural world. My thesis became divided into three subsections, *The Human Body and the Earth as a Body: Direct Connections*, *Ailments: In the Body and the Earth*, and *Dancers, Nature, and Activism*. In summation, my thesis provides connection between the two realms of my undergraduate study.



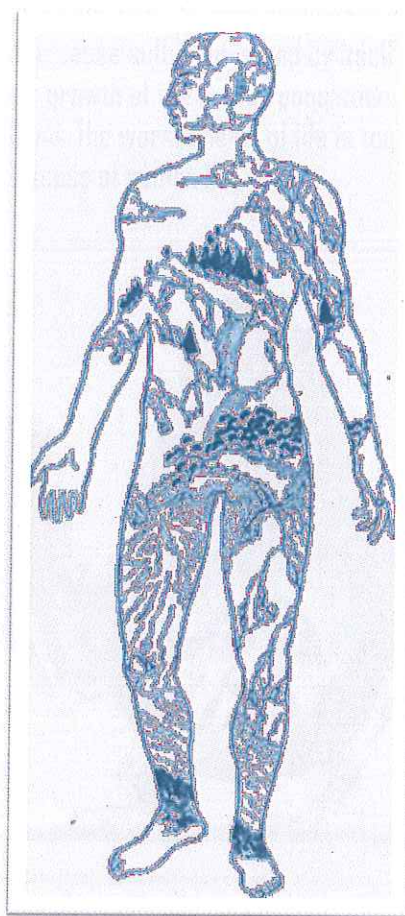
## The Human Body and the Earth as a Body: Direct Connections

The ancient Greeks believed in the concept of microcosms. The cosmos was where they looked for the answers to their questions about life. It told them about the place for humans within the universe by viewing them as manifestations of it. The concept of mikros kosmos, as the Greeks said it, described humans as “little worlds” within each body. Each human was believed to be a tiny version of the universe, an ordered system that functioned in synchronization with all its parts, full of natural beauty and value. Today this connection between humans and nature is not such a common thought. People do not naturally connect the human body to nature and the world. But if you stop and think about all the connections between our design and the design of the earth it’s hard to ignore all the similarities found there.

### mi-cro-cosm

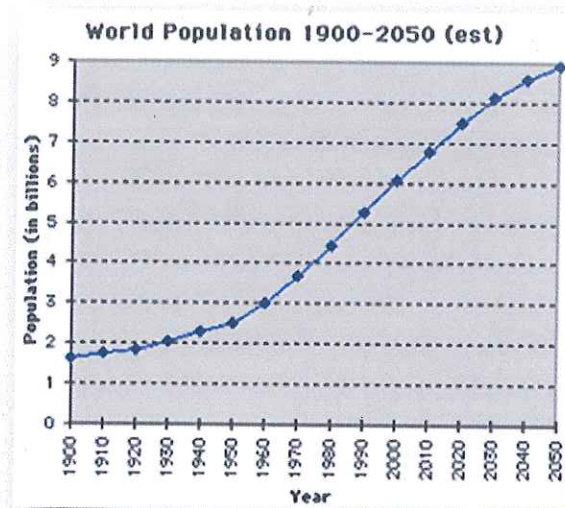
[mahy-kruh-koz-uh m]

1. a little world; a world in miniature (opposed to macrocosm).
2. anything that is regarded as a world in miniature.
3. human beings, humanity, society, or the like, viewed as an epitome or miniature of the world or universe.
4. A community, place, or situation regarded as encapsulating in miniature the characteristic features of something much larger.
5. Humankind regarded as the epitome of the universe.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> "Microcosm." *Dictionary.com*. Dictionary.com, n.d. Web. 05 May 2013.

There are millions of human bodies on this earth, but only one planet. The ratio is about 7 billion to 1. Human population keeps climbing at astronomical rates but still only one planet can be found. Much of the modern world is in denial of this fact, living in a manner that suggests the world has an endless supply of resources. But the reality is that we live on a finite planet and if we don't take care of the one earth that we have, it will be destroyed. Much of the human race is in denial, unable to understand how our earth can run out of the means to support us. For these people I present a new analogy, of the human and the earth's body as one in the same. I suggest that we take a step back and look at our similarities and how deeply each individual human reflects the earth. If we can understand the systems of the human body and how it functions then making the same connections to the earth is simple. I encourage all people to view the earth as a reflection of their own body, especially



"...the chief cause for the impending collapse of the world - the cause sufficient in and by itself - is the enormous growth of the human population: the human flood. The worst enemy of life is too much life: the excess of human life."<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Linkola, Pentti. *Can Life Prevail?: A Radical Approach to the Environmental Crisis*. [S.l.]: Integral Tradition Pub., 2009. Print.

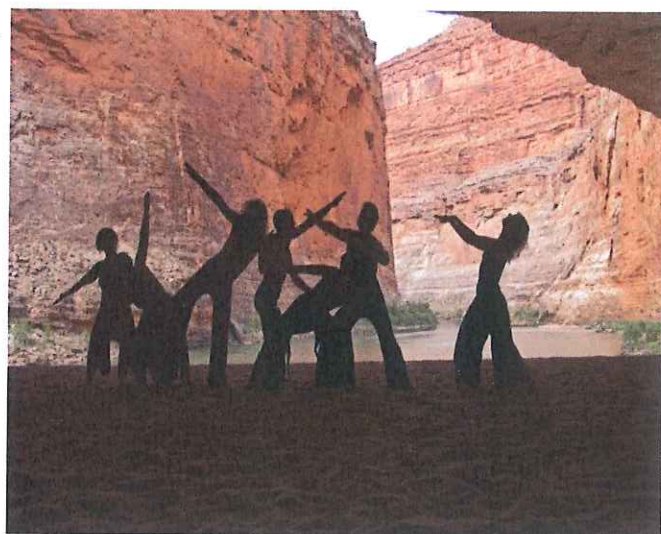


those who have a deep understanding of their physically self.

Athletes, trainers, Yogis, physical fitness specialists, dancers, and many others have gained these strong connections to their own bodies, as a dancer I have found them for myself and aim to encourage other dancers to apply this same understanding of their bodies to the natural world. After all, we have a deeply rooted understanding of the body. We know how to use every muscle and joint and how to keep ourselves healthy and functional. This makes it easy to connect with the earth, and find an understanding of its inner workings. If a dancer can self identify the tiniest misalignment in their spine, correct it, and improve then it seems comparatively easy for them to find issues within the natural environment, correct them, and improve the world. This is a generalization of course, given that one dancer cannot save the entire planet like they can correct their own



Dancers experiencing nature through art



"Just as the ancients danced to call upon the spirits in nature, we too can dance to find the spirits within ourselves that have been long buried and forgotten."

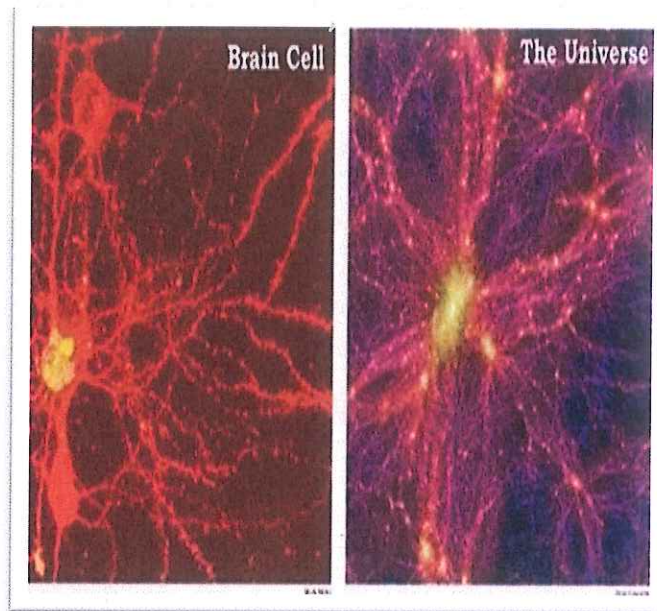
- Anna Halprin

alignment. But identification and realization of the problem is the first step, and dancers can be key players in this.

The following is a series of my reflections on these connections, discussing different aspects of the human form that are reflected in the earth and vice versa. It's accompanied by images, scholarly support, and the thoughts of others. It is my hope that these connections can help others, and open a new community up to the necessary conservation of the earth.

## BRAIN

The most prevalent scientific research that shows connections between the human body and the world is regarding the brain. The organ itself is a widely researched and little understood part of the human body. Its capacity is unknown, but it is the center of our lives. It contains our thoughts, feelings, ideas, anything and everything we ever do comes from the brain and moves



### Thoughts from Your Brain Is the Universe<sup>3</sup>

"What if there is physical evidence that the brain is a quantum device, and that its design reflects the cosmos in an uncanny way that cannot be by chance? In the Vedic tradition of India, it is held that 'as is the smallest, so is the greatest. As is the microcosm, so is the macrocosm.'"

"The universe may be growing in the same way as a giant brain -- with the electrical firing between brain cells 'mirrored' by the shape of expanding galaxies. Looking at simulations of galaxy interconnections in the early universe and neuron interconnections makes it virtually impossible to tell them apart. The brain and the cosmos, like the Internet, are networks, and they evolve the same way. The result...is that the universe really does grow like a brain."

<sup>3</sup> Chopra, Deepak. "Your Brain Is the Universe -- Part I." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 01 Apr. 2013. Web. 05 May 2013.

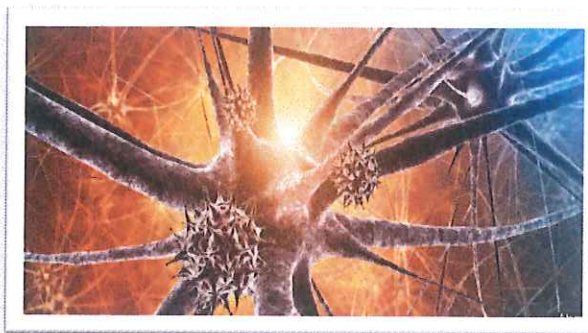


into the rest of the body. The universe acts in the same way, it is unfathomably large and we don't know the half of what it contains. But we know that every life form in existence is found within it. The actions of the universe are manifested in every created thing.

As dancers we understand how the beginning of an action, an idea or a spark, triggers every little movement and muscle contraction. We can't execute a single step without asking the brain to do it. Whether we realize it or not it's the source of our dancing. We train our brains as much as our bodies, to respond to the slightest cue and adjust the body in the tiniest manner. It's no wonder that scientists have studied the brain for years; it's the incredible machine that runs our lives.

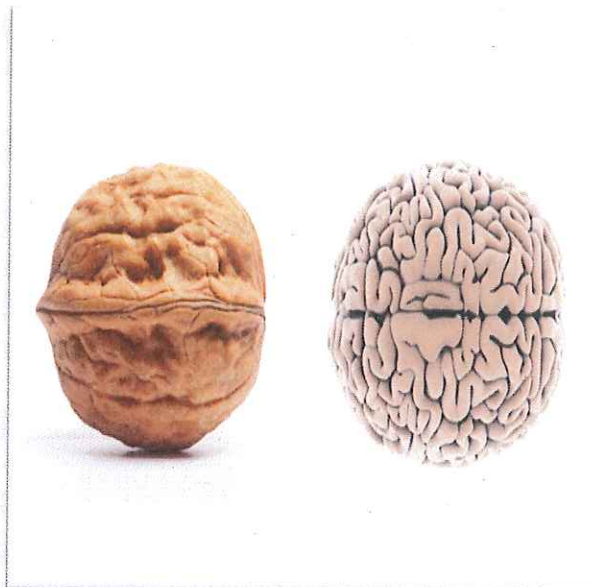
The concept of the brain as a metaphorical universe is one that scientists often have a hard time grasping. It is a theory criticized for being too metaphysical

### Physicists Find Evidence That The Universe Is A 'Giant Brain'<sup>4</sup>



"The study raises profound questions about how the universe works"

"For a physicist it's an immediate signal that there is some missing understanding of how nature works."



<sup>4</sup> "Physicists Find Evidence That The Universe Is A 'Giant Brain'" *The Full*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 May 2013.

and not based in exact science. But researchers are becoming increasingly more aware of the pattern of the brains that mimic the patterns of the universe as a whole.

## BONES

As previously discussed, the human body is a natural body that mimics nature; the composition of our bodies greatly reflects the composition of the world. Each human body has an inner system of bones, arteries, and ligaments, all of which can be symbolically represented in the greater universe. Our bones hold us together like the bones of earth, the continental plates that move and shift. The structural bones of the body, the spine, and the pelvis stabilize the limbs and keep the body upright and strong.

Strong bones make for functional human beings. We are told to drink milk and eat calcium rich foods as a child so that while our bones are growing and developing they receive the proper nutrition. We are

## Types of Tectonic Plates

"The plates make up Earth's outer shell, called the **lithosphere**. (This includes the crust and uppermost part of the mantle.) Currents in the molten rocks below move them along like they are on a conveyor belts. Most geologic activity stems from their interaction, where the plates meet or divide. The movement of the plates creates three types of tectonic boundaries"

### Convergent Boundaries:

**The plates move in to one another and collide, forming mountain ranges. For example, the Himalayas were created by convergent plates ramming into one another. Underwater convergent plates subduct, meaning one plate moves under another and dives downward while the other gets pushed upwards to form mountains.**

### Divergent Boundaries:

**The plates move away from each other as magma is pushed up from the earth's center. The ocean floor gets spread apart and land masses form as the magma hardens.**

### Transform Boundaries:

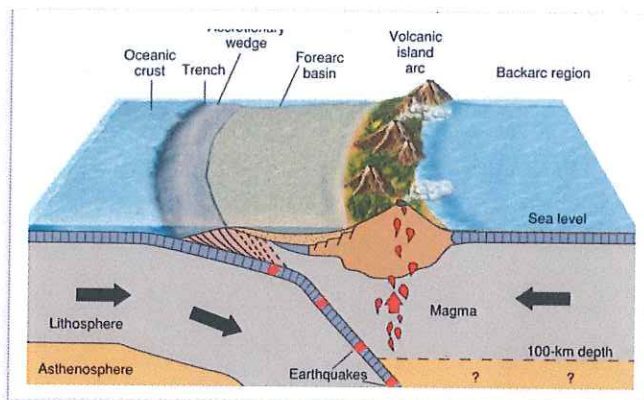
**The plates move sideways next to one another, grinding into one another, and creating frequent earthquakes. The San Andres Fault is the most famous of these, plaguing California with many earthquakes.<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>5</sup> "Plate Tectonics." *National Geographic*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 May 2013.

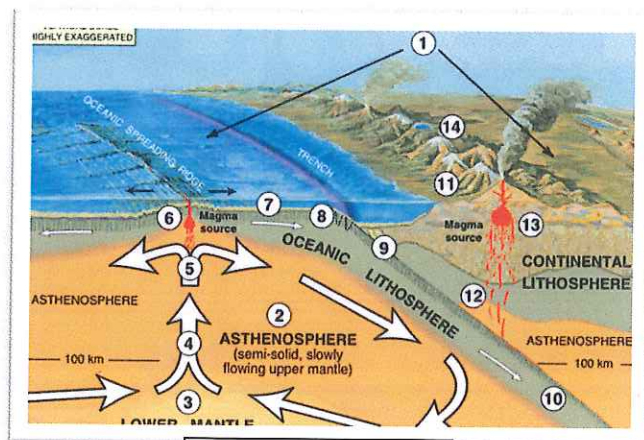
told to maintain the intake of calcium during our lives so as to keep our aging bones from hurting, fracturing or even breaking. Broken bones within the body directly affect a human; often they become debilitated and unable to perform normal tasks. A broken bone for a dancer prevents them from performing their art or making a living.

Broken bones can drastically impact one's life, making it impossible for people who use their bodies to function.

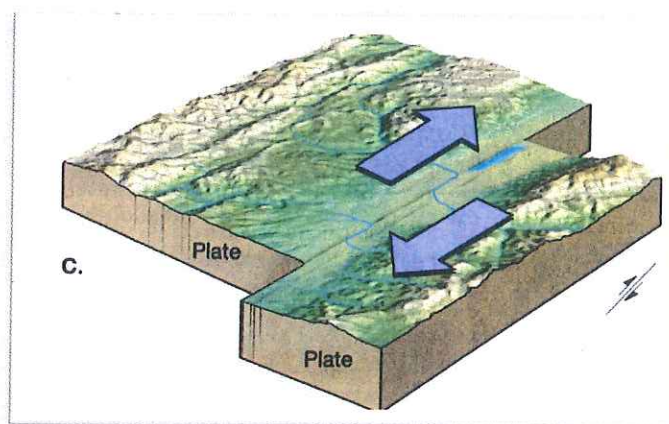
Nature reflects these same concerns, although the bones of the earth are much different than the bones of the human body. Our earth's bones are its tectonic plates, the things that stand hard and strong beneath it, but often shift and move in order to allow the earth to shape and reform itself. Tectonic plates are the core structure of the earth; they support the ground we walk on and the communities we live in. Without these, just like without our bones, the earth would crumble and everything would fall apart.



Converging Plates



Diverging Plates



Transforming Plates



When the earth's bones move and break disaster strikes just like a broken bone within the body. Earthquakes destroy cities and towns, and entire populations are subjected to tsunamis. Millions of lives can be disrupted by a simple shift in the plates. Just like a broken bone can disrupt the life of a person, a break in a tectonic plate does the same on a multiplied level.

## BLOOD

Our blood, when clean and flowing, keeps us alive and pumps oxygen through our bodies, much like the rivers, lakes and streams of the world that keep nature moving, thriving, and alive. The human body needs blood to survive, it makes the vital organs function smoothly, keeping our heart beat going. Without clean and plentiful blood we can no longer function and run our complex systems of life. The brain would shut down the heart would stop beating. Nothing would run through our veins.



**Circulation:**  
Blood must circulate through the body in a specific pattern, pumped by the heart. The ocean currents circulate water throughout the world to keep it moving and the ecosystems flowing. These circulation patterns function in the same manner.<sup>6</sup>

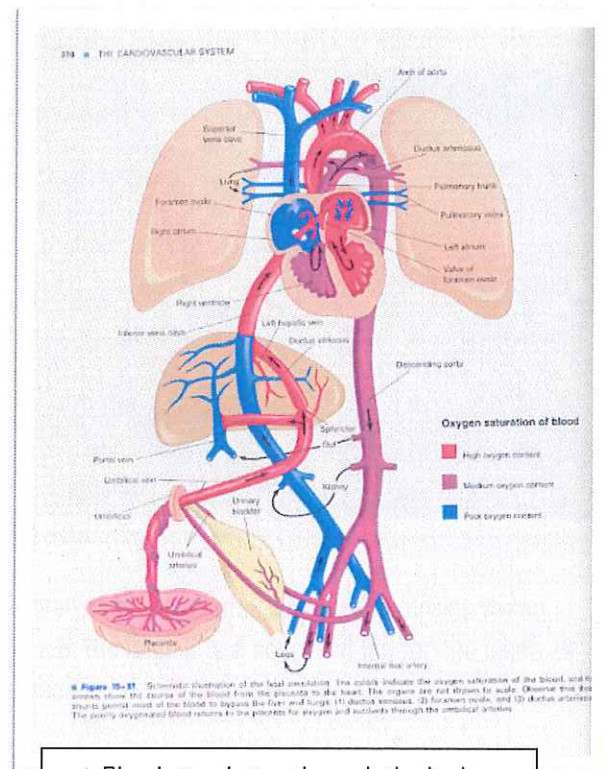
<sup>6</sup> "Circulation." *American Heart Association*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 May 2013.



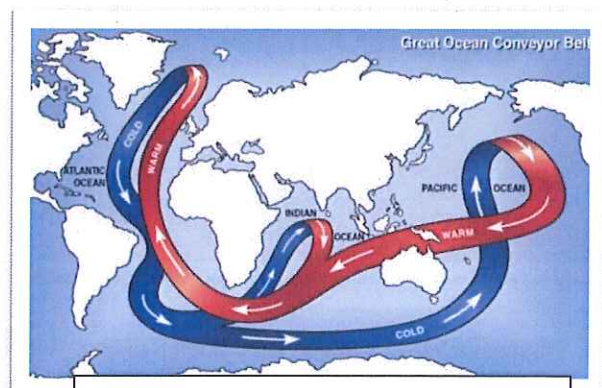
The rivers and bodies of water on the earth have the same effect on the systems of the world. They bring water to every area of the earth, the water that is necessary for life. This water, with large amounts of help from the sun, is responsible for the production of all life on the planet. Without water there are few species that would be able to survive. If our rivers are altered, damned, locked, or rerouted then precious sources of life cannot be delivered throughout our ecosystems.

Nature was perfect and successful before the introduction of human technology, all systems flowing with ease. But today's world has distorted the direction of water sources for personal gain, leaving the natural world sick in many instances.

The blood flowing through our veins is sick as well, as we pollute our bodies with unnatural chemicals, processed foods, and harmful substances. The world's rivers, lakes and streams are the same, as we pollute them with, oil, plastic, trash, and all



Blood circulation through the body



Ocean current circulation

sorts of engineered chemicals that, on the surface, make our lives easier. But is life really easier with fast food, high fructose corn syrup, polyvinylchloride, and the hundreds of other engineered chemicals? It may seem like polluting our blood stream and polluting our rivers is a small price to pay for quick, cheap, and bountiful goods. But the rivers are the life blood of the natural world, and our production system continues to only further pollute these resources. Our natural world will no longer exist if waste water fills the streams and plastic takes over the ocean. The earth will die, just like a human whose heart no longer receives blood.

## SKIN

The sky and the atmosphere contain all life on earth, making the world a functional place for us to live within our encompassing organism, the skin.



A river seen from outer space as it carries water across the land. It is a source of life for the earth as a whole.



Blood veins in a human carry blood to the necessary parts, keeping the heart pumping. The two images show how veins are microcosms of rivers.



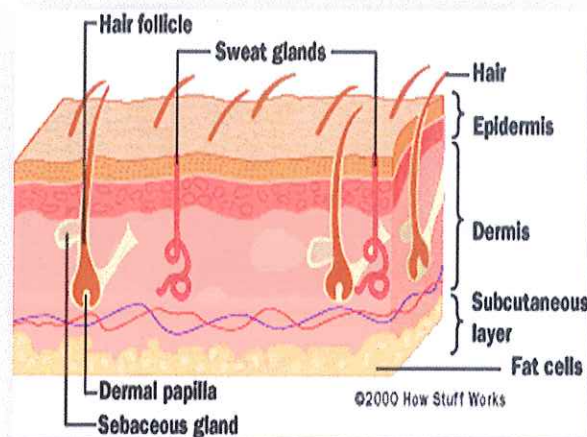
The skin contains and protects us in a way that parallels the sky. It holds our bones, internal organs, tissues, and all other bodily structures within us. It contains our blood and keeps us alive. The skin allows movement between the internal human and the outside world.

Sweat can move through our skin, evaporating out into the atmosphere, shedding moisture from within us. When we dance the skin allows sweat to escape from it, helping us to stay cool and maintain a lower body temperature in the midst of hard physical work. Conversely the hair on our skin can stand up to protect us and try to keep our bodies warm. The skin and its components work to maintain a natural temperature balance within our bodies.

The atmosphere surrounding us is what keeps the temperature of the earth at a livable level, following the same methods as the skin. Since the Industrial Revolution, development of new technology and the

Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration.

-Unknown



The skin allows sweat to move through it but protects our bodies from external harms.

### Perspiration: Cooling the Body

When the outside temperatures are higher than the body temperature radiation, conduction and convection all transfer heat into the body rather than out. But evaporation is a bodily function that transfers the heat outwards. Perspiration leaves the body through this process.

The skin begins to sweat at around 37°C and then perspiration will increase as the temperature does. The normal perspiration rate is about 1.5 liters/hour. However, if in a very hot climate it can reach up to 3.5 liters/hr.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "Perspiration (physiology)." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web. 07 May 2013.

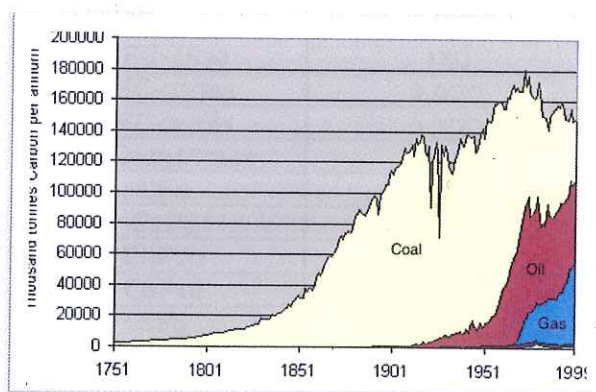
mechanization of the labor force have brought machines of all kinds designed to do work for us. This has been an incredible benefit to society in many ways. However, these machines run on the combustion of fossil fuels; coal, oil, and natural gas, which release carbon dioxide and other pollutants into the atmosphere. In the years since the Industrial Revolution emissions have steadily increased as society has become more dependent on machines. From cars and airplanes, to factory equipment, we are constantly producing emissions as we live our daily lives.

These emissions, also known as greenhouse gasses, are not inherently bad, before the occurrence of mass industrialization they were present in a relatively stable amount within the atmosphere. They were part of natural geochemical cycles that needed a certain quantity of them to be present in the atmosphere to keep the earth warm.

Images of the Industrial revolution increased emissions and the mechanization of the labor force:



Carbon emission since Industrial Revolution:

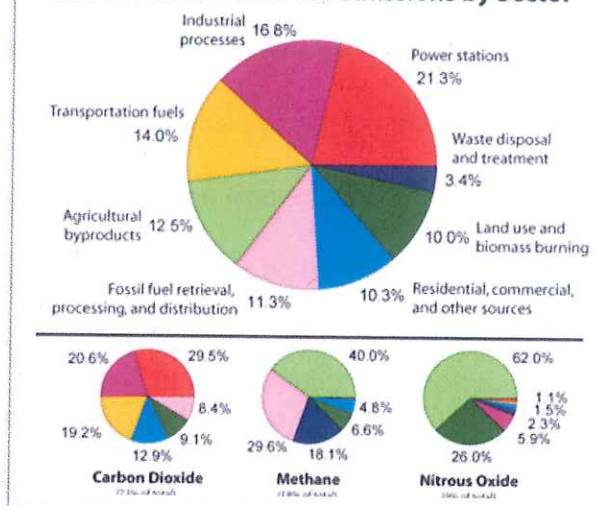




The trapping of these gasses in know as the greenhouse effect. When light from the sun strikes the earth it is re-radiated into space in the form of infrared radiation, or heat. The greenhouse gasses (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, water vapor, and others) absorb some of this radiation and prevent it from escaping the earth's atmosphere. The absorbed radiation is responsible for the increasing warmth.

The result is global warming, or climate change, which affects the weather, ocean currents, ice caps, and habitats of areas across the world. If the earth's skin, the atmosphere, allowed all the sun's rays to pass through and right back out of the earth's sphere then humans could not exist in the cold temperature that would result. Without the atmospheric skin of the earth the human race could not survive, just as a lack of skin would pose a challenge to individual human life.

**Annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Sector**



Different types of production produce different type of emission and at different levels as seen above. There are varying types of greenhouse gasses as seen below, each with a different level of global warming potential.

Gas	Global Warming Potential
Carbon Dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> )	1
Methane (CH <sub>4</sub> )	21
Nitrous Oxide (N <sub>2</sub> O)	310
HFC-23	11,700
HFC-125	2,800
HFC-134a	1,300
HFC-143a	3,800
HFC-152a	140
HFC-227ea	2,900
HFC-236fa	6,300
HFC-4310mee	1,300
CF <sub>4</sub>	6,500
C <sub>2</sub> F <sub>6</sub>	9,200
C <sub>4</sub> F <sub>10</sub>	7,000
C <sub>6</sub> F <sub>14</sub>	7,400
SF <sub>6</sub>	23,900

## **Ailments: In the Body and the Earth**

This series of comparisons between the earth and the body, the brain and the universe, the plates and the bones, rivers and veins, and the sky and skin, are only the begging of these comparisons. The earth and the human are full of similarities. By expressing this connection I hoped to connect those with a consciousness of the human body to the earth. By seeing how synonymous the two can be it becomes much easier for the body conscious, like dancers, to take similar actions in preserving their bodies and the natural world. However the body and the natural world can find other common connections beyond these direct correlations with the body. The next portion of my reflections will discuss this, looking at entire systems and aspect of the human can be correlated to the natural world.

## **POLLUTION**

Pollution of the human body and its systems has drastic side effects. Consuming foods or chemicals wrong for the human composition can lead to harmful instances within the human's body. When we eat with imbalance, excessive fat, salt, and sugar, we essentially pollute our system. When we indulge in substances that shouldn't be in our food, but unfortunately are, we harm our system as well. Food addiction leads to issues of heart health, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer, and many more. Addiction to drug substances can cause liver damage, organ failure, and dependency issues that can destroy lives.

A polluted body in any of these ways is an ineffective body. In addition, so many substances within our world expose us to harmful chemicals. Sometimes we don't even realize it, but chemicals are all around us. The list of daily items that may do harm to us and the natural environment is endless

and the list of common products containing known carcinogens is just as long. Our bodies are polluted without our knowledge or control. New born babies are even born into the world with trace amounts of pollution within them, given to them by their mothers. There is no longer a pure human being on this earth. We are surrounded by toxic chemicals and pollutant coated products. We are polluted bodies.

Imagine how this can affect the life of humans who use their bodies on a regular basis as a means of self support and profession. A dancer needs to have a healthy functioning body in order to be the best at their craft. Yet every dancer faces the same challenges as all other humans, nearly constant exposure to chemicals or pollutants of some kind. They must breathe whatever air is around them.. The pollution from factories, exhaust from cars and output for all sorts of machines, is put into

### Air Pollution:

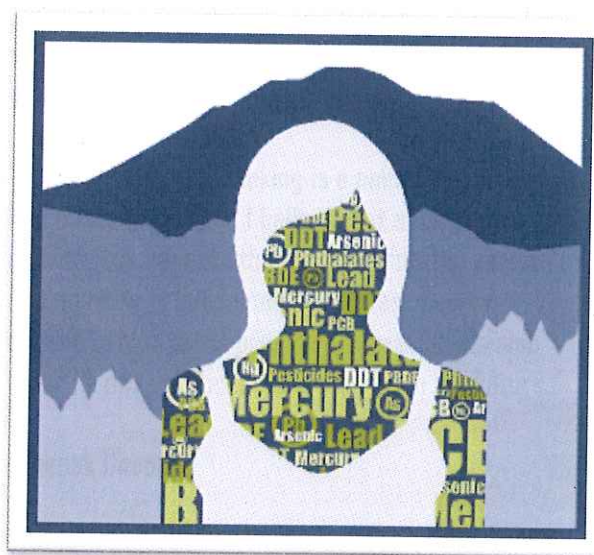
"Toxic air pollutants, also known as hazardous air pollutants, are those pollutants that are known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health effects, such as reproductive effects or birth defects, or adverse environmental effects"

#### Pollutants:

- benzene, is found in gasoline;
- perchloroethylene, emitted from dry cleaning facilities
- methylene chloride, solvent
- dioxin
- asbestos
- toluene
- metals, such as cadmium, mercury, chromium, and lead compounds.

#### Effects of Air Pollution:

- increased chance of cancer
- damage to the immune system,
- neurological, reproductive (e.g., reduced fertility), developmental, respiratory and other health problems.<sup>8</sup>



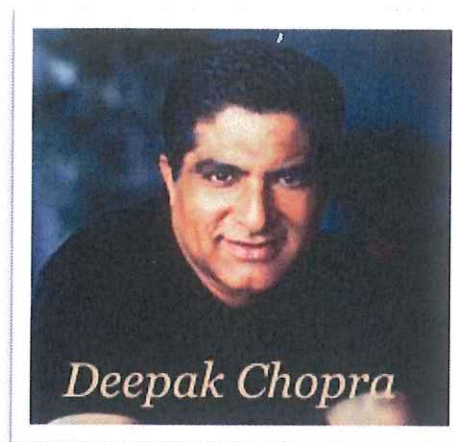
<sup>8</sup> "About Air Toxics." EPA. Environmental Protection Agency, n.d. Web. 09 May 2013.



the air all around us. We are exposed to it without choice. And just as this harms our human bodies, it has detrimental effects on the world as well. These pollutants destroy the air, water and soil, and make healthy life for all species difficult.

## PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

When the human body suffers physical illness or harm there is a scientifically suspected relationship to psychological feelings. Humans feel mental anguish when faced with physical ailments. Mentally depressed people often find themselves feeling physically sick, and severe sickness or injury can lead to mental illness as well. For example, when suffering from depression, the body gets sickly, becoming more susceptible to illness and developing physical symptoms. Or when a person is diagnosed with cancer, or loses quality of life from a disease, they can often be faced with depression or other psychological



Deepak Chopra, a holistic health guru trained in modern medicine, he is one of the world best known doctors of alternative medicine.

"Thinking is "real" medicine, as proven by the placebo effect. When given a sugar pill in place of a prescription drug, an average of 30% of subjects will show a positive response. What causes this response isn't a physical substance but the activity of the mind-body connection. Expectations are powerful. If you think you've been given a drug that will make you better, often that is enough to make you better"

"The alternative to thinking is a calm mind that is had peace with itself. I believe that such a mind delivers the benefits that positive thinking cannot, and my view is supported by studies showing a decline in high blood pressure, stress levels and other disease states among long-term meditators."

-Deepak Chopra.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Chopra, Deepak. "Can Positive Thinking Make You Well?" *CNN*. Cable News Network, 05 Dec. 2011. Web. 09 May 2013.



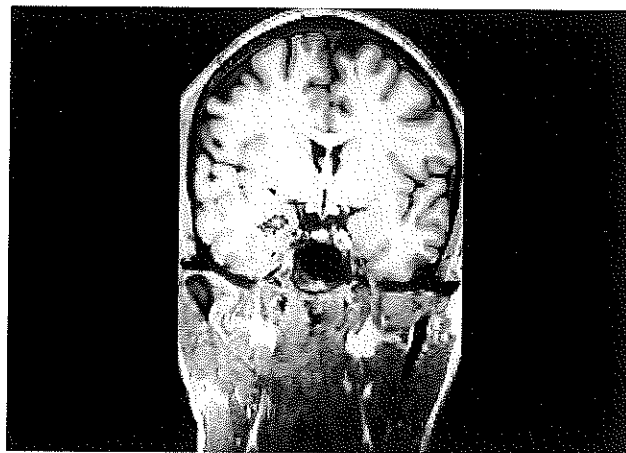
side effects. The two issues are connected and positive thinking has often been believed to be a cure for psychical illness, while negative thinking can be attributed to accepting illness within the body.

I think considering the elements of summarily between humans and the earth, there must be some sort of equivalent for the world's ecosystems. As they are physically damaged and polluted, there must be some sort of loss of well being for the earth as a whole. The earth may not have the literal feelings and emotions that a human being has. But there must be some similar representation of emotional struggle within the earth's systems.

The mental suffering that can fall upon a community of citizens due destruction of the natural world may be that similarity. It is humans who feel the loss of a natural space when it is developed, mined, clear cut, or polluted. A population of humans as a whole suffering

The 2007 National Health Interview Survey found that 20 million US adults had turned to meditation for health reasons in the previous year.

Early research focused on the health benefits of stress reduction from meditation, but in recent years, neuroscientists like Lazar have begun using magnetic resonance imaging to show that meditation can make actual structural changes in the brain.<sup>10</sup>



Study participants who completed an eight-week meditation training course had reduced activity in the right amygdala (highlighted structure) in response to emotional images, even when not meditating.

<sup>10</sup> "Meditation's Positive Residual Effects." *Harvard Gazette*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 May 2013.

from a lack of exposure to nature's beauty could lead decreased mental and physical wellness.

The lack of exposure to the natural world that exists today can account for the sadness within the "earth's psyche" as the majority of society now suffers from "nature-deficit disorder."<sup>11</sup> As a society we have left behind nature, lost a sense of its importance, destroyed much of the beauty that it contained, and ignored the consequences. This overreaching disconnect from nature becomes the earth's physical and mental ailments, as society as a whole suffers.

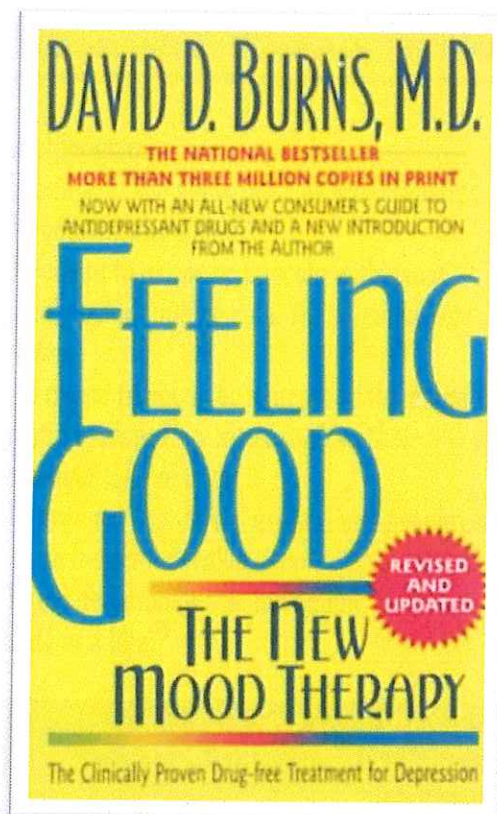
## SYNCHRONIZATION

All parts of the human body, when working in synchronization with one another, function successfully. All the little pieces of our anatomy down to each tiny cell are designed to work together to make us

<sup>11</sup> Louv, Richard. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin of Chapel Hill, 2005. Print.

"That's one of the peculiar things about bad moods - we often fool ourselves and create misery by telling ourselves things that simply are not true."

-David D. Burns, M.D.



12

Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy, A drug free cure to anxiety and depression that encourages positive thinking to remedy depressive symptoms.

<sup>12</sup> Burns, David D. *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*. New York: Morrow, 1980. Print.

functional human beings. It's a careful balance of all our components, the cells, molecules and atoms that work together.

This make up of humans reflects society and the earth in several ways, through the design of our societies and the design of our world. Our societies, cities, towns, and other communities, are built like the systems of the body. A well planned city works in synchronization with all its parts. The land use, traffic direction, development, housing, and commercial and industrial land. These designated areas are highly similar to the workings of the human body. Each aspect of the city functions to support the others.

The earth's ecosystems function in the same manner. Like the tiny cells of our bodies or the individuals within a community, the many aspects of nature act as small parts of the whole. Each fish in the ocean is part of that ecosystem and without them it would suffer .Many examples of



**syn-chro-nize:**

1. To occur at the same time; be simultaneous.
2. To operate in unison.
3. To cause to occur or operate with exact coincidence in time or rate: *We synchronized our watches.*
4. To cause to occur or operate at the same time as something else: *They synchronized their trip with the annual tulip festival.*
5. To arrange (historical events) in a synchronism so as to indicate parallel occurrence.
6. To cause (soundtrack and action) to match exactly in a film.<sup>13</sup>



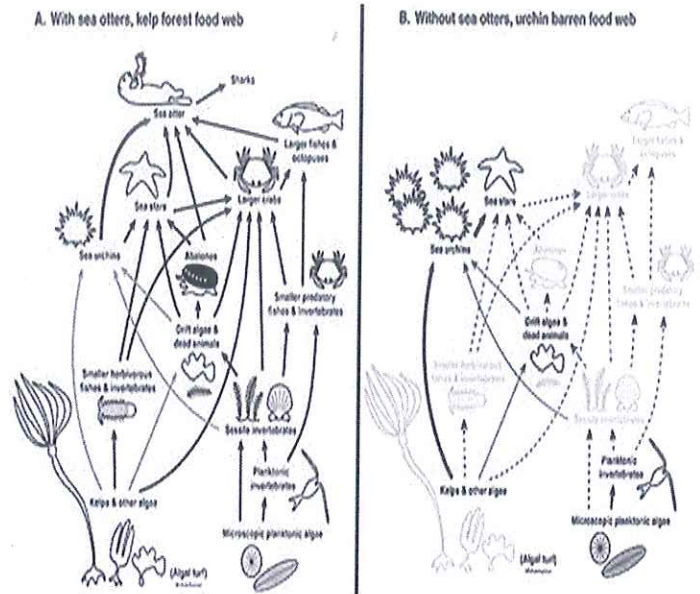
A synchronized dance performed by thousands, in North Korea

<sup>13</sup> "Synchronization." *Merriam-Webster*. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 09 May 2013.

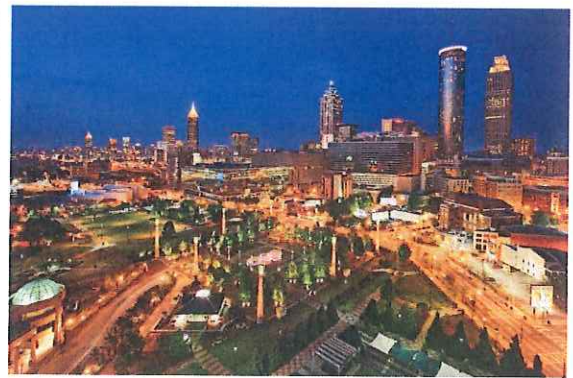


this exist in nature, and as species become endangered the systems of the earth fall out of balance. The Kelp Forests off the coast of California in area of the South Bay can demonstrate this. When the sea otters of this area became endangered, due to overhunting, the ecosystem suffered. The otters ate sea urchins and other kelp forest creatures. But the depletion in the otter population left too many urchins alive. The kelp forest became overwhelmed and could not continue to grow in this environment. Severe depletion of these underwater forests resulted. The lack of synchronization left the ecosystem in a wreck.

Dancers can understand the value of synchronization, a key skill within their field. Many forms of dance require this technical ability and find it aesthetically pleasing. If a dancer falls out of synchronization they won't fall apart, like an ecosystem. But there is a loss of value in the dance performance. Some art forms value



A chain of reactions within the ecosystem of the Kelp Forests through the balance of life out of synchronization, depleting the forest and the biodiversity among them. (The chain with Sea Otter on left, without on right)



Synchronized urban planning occurs in all well developed cities, through the creation of a General Plan that maps growths and coordinates all the cities functions for optimal quality of life for residents.

this more than others. A ballet dancer in the classical style must work hard to synchronize their limbs through choreography. When performing in an ensemble dancers must work tirelessly to synchronize as well. When they do not perform in unison the performance is downgraded by observers. This reflects issues within society as well, a need for perfection and specified beauty in the things we see. This value can be transferred to the ecosystems and synchronization in this form.

### **Dancers, Nature, and Activism**

As I have discussed in my writing so far, the connection between dancer and the environment are easily made, and these connections are necessary. The majority of the dance community, fixated on their own art, has not found these connections yet. However, there are many key members of the dance community that have discovered

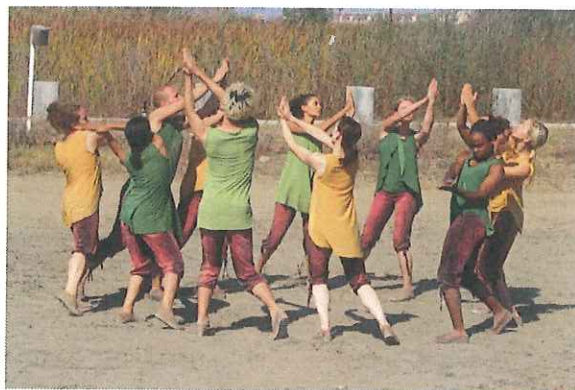
them and have begun to implement them in their dancing. Most notably, there are several renowned choreographers that have also become activist in the environmental community. They use their dances as a platform for speaking up about these issues. It's an incredible mixture of art and activism and it provides a unique opportunity for dancers to connect with the environment.

The modern dance community is most well known for its connection to the environmental field, and the choreographers that I have connected with in my research are all from the modern dance community as well. Kristen Smiarowski, Anna Halprin and Jennifer Monson are the three artists whose work I have evaluated. All three share a desire to connect with, protect, and advocate for nature throughout their dancing.

## SMIAROWSKI

Kristen Smiarowski's work is notably connected to the environment. As a modern dancer and choreographer she has always had made social and environmental activist a focal point in her work. Perhaps the most environmentally center of her works is *Groundswell*, a site specific dance that took place in the Ballona Wetlands, located in Playa Vista, California. The dance, in my opinion, took on environmental issues in several ways. The location is their fits of these. By placing the dance in a wetland setting it addressed the issue of wetland conservation. California has lost ninety percent of its costal wetland use to development and urban sprawl. At one times wetland existed all along the states coast. But today little remains, the Ballona wetland being one of the largest portions left.

The Ballona Wetland used to be much larger in size as well, before the development of Playa Vista, and urban



"It is not often that one experiences dance and music together in a natural outdoor setting. "*Groundswell*," a site specific dance in the Ballona Freshwater Marsh created by choreographer Kristen Smiarowski"<sup>14</sup>

"A crew of about twenty people, some of them Friends of Ballona Wetlands docents and staff who were ready to answer questions about the Marsh and the birds, also assisted behind the scenes in making this a flawless event.."

<sup>14</sup> Fimiani, Lisa. "Comments." Rev. of *Groundswell*. Executive Director of Friends of Ballona Wetlands 2006: n. pag. Print.



community that was placed directly atop of former wetland area. By building on these wetlands and others valuable natural habitat is destroyed. Wetland provides a home for a diverse number of species and create a flourishing natural habitat. They are also known for their water filtration qualities, purifying the groundwater as it runs through them before it hits the ocean. And finally, protecting the land from the ocean, incoming water and flooding.

By placing her work in this setting, I felt that Smiarowski was commenting on the importance of the wetland for all these reasons, and the need to conserve the little amount that we have left. She was also addressing the need to protect the birds and other wildlife that rely on the wetlands as a home. Her choreography mimics the nature of its bird resident and their daily life, as if to call attention to the important wildlife that lives here and could not exist without the wetlands. In addition, and most relevant to



"With each performance different bird species would circle above over the Marsh, almost on cue, saluting the dancers who seemed to christen this three and a half year old reconstructed Marsh, in their symbolic tribute to its beauty and magic, as if to say, you've finally arrived. The feeling was reminiscent of days long ago when man was one with nature"

"that unity we felt, grateful to embrace the Marsh in a new way, through the dance of these beings who became one with the Marsh and took us with them on their journey. We were now one with them and each other"

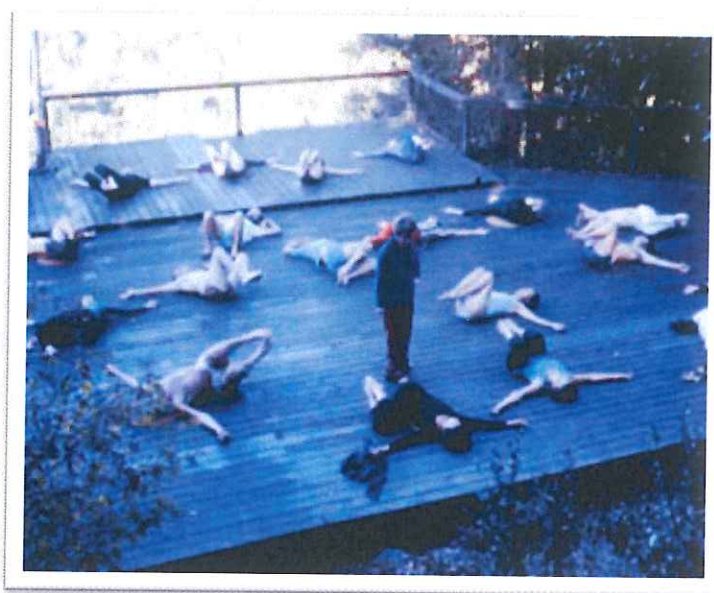


human connection to the natural world, her dance forced interaction between humans and nature, especially dancers. Smiarowski saw the connection that dancers could make within this space, how they could influence others to care about it, and how connection with nature is a human a necessary act. Through her work she epitomized the connection between dancers and the natural world.

## HALPRIN

Anna Halprin is another choreographer with environmental intentions. Located in Kentfield, California, Halprin brings dance and the natural world together. As a dancer she finds value in connecting to the natural world through art, and has constructed an outdoor deck where she teaches, allowing anyone who comes to work with her to enjoy the beautiful surroundings while dancing. She is a world renowned artist, whose work as a dancer has

Dancers experience Anna Halprin's dance deck located amongst the redwoods of Kentfield, CA



"Just as the ancients danced to call upon the spirits in nature, we too can dance to find the spirits within ourselves that have been long buried and forgotten."

- Anna Halprin

Dance is not about the body as a center, the body is the connection to our surroundings."

-Anna Halprin"<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Poynor, Helen. "Anna Halprin and the Sea Ranch Collective, An Embodied Engagement with Place." *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices* 1.1 (2009): 121-32. Print.



transcended beyond the environmental field. She has helped redefine what dance is, where it should take pace, and how it should be presented, and was one of the first artists to consider the healing capacity of movement.

Halprin's work is of particular importance here because of her deep connections to her surroundings. The natural world where she creates is what informs the content of her dance. She is deeply rooted in the natural environment and finds inspiration in its qualities. In this way, I see her work as advocacy for human and world connections. By involving space in the creative process she requires a connection and familiarity between the dancer and the world around them.

These specific ideas are highlighted in some of her works, most notably Planetary Dance. This movement experience is held annually in northern California. The



Anna Halprin, during the Earth Run at the annual Planetary Dance in Northern California



Participants in the Planetary Dance, moving in concentric circle to unite themselves with the earth and make peace.

dance involves the community, and is tailored so that anyone can participate. It centers around a dance called the Earth Run, where participants circle a natural setting in the act of dance and prayer. This dance exemplifies all the Halprin stands for, healing, expression, connection to the natural world, and to your community.

## IN CONCLUSION

I am not the only one, or even the first, to connect dance and nature. As seen above it has been done many times by dancers far beyond my experience. I was lucky enough to stumble upon these nature-dance pioneers in my research. Their work has inspired me to further my connections to the natural world, and encourage others to do so. Smiarowski and Halprin are the two choreographers that most exemplified my feelings toward the natural world. But countless others exist, and advocates for the

environment are present in realms far beyond dance. A concern for the natural world is spreading quickly, and my generation is going to be the fuel to fires that keeps this pattern going. My experiences as dancer have shown me that the creative minded can translate their artistic capacity into a concern for the natural world. In bringing to light the uncanny parallels between human life and natural life, with an emphasis on the dancer's human form, I have hoped to inspire other dancers. The present and the future are critical moments for development and creative solutions to the natural world's problems. Dancers can stand at the forefront of this movement, leading us into a better world.

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# Dancers as Environmentalists: Dance, the Body, and Nature

Elizabeth Snyder

Senior Thesis  
Professor Heiland  
November 2012

Ancient Greeks sought to answer many questions about life, including the place of humans amongst the universe. They turned to the philosophers of their time to better understand these ideas. Philosophers like Plato were developing the concept of mikros kosmos, or microcosm, meaning little world. Each human was believed to be a tiny version of the universe, the human body having the same but smaller composition of the universe itself. To the Greeks the word kosmos implied an ordered system that functioned in synchronization with all its parts, full of natural beauty and value. The universe and its natural components as well as each individual human embodied these ideas.<sup>a</sup> This early way of thinking spread from ancient Greece into Europe up until the time of Scientific Revolution, when society began to favor a more mechanized view of the universe and moved away from ideas of harmony between humans, nature and the kosmos.<sup>b</sup>

Though seemingly unrelated, these ancient Greek views of the kosmos are directly connected to the development of human perceptions of dance, the human body, and nature. As society and culture have changed so has human awareness. The world today no longer shares the same perspectives of order and beauty reflected from the universe onto each individual. A changing value system has altered these ideas. Modern ideals no longer place emphasis on respect or connection to the world or nature, nor do they focus on the capacity for beauty within each individual human body. Instead we value wealth, power, and development and focus our attention on the world of production and consumption.<sup>c</sup> We have lost a sense of our humanity and originality on this planet, and have destroyed all respect for the bountiful world that was bestowed upon us. We no longer connect to the kosmos like the ancient Greeks, instead we have

become a society encouraged to disconnect from our natural surroundings, and therefore selfishly disregarded are the natural wealth that was given to us.

To return to our former vision of nature and humanity as one, we must examine what it means to be connected to the kosmos, how that affects our relationship to the environment and to our own bodies. Dance, as an art form so in tune with the human body, is the key in helping society find the mikros kosmos within ourselves. Dancers, with this gained knowledge of their bodies and their connection to the world around them, have the tools to promote a worldlier outlook. Beyond this, dancers require nature as sources of their work, needing to understand earthly space, time and energy in order to effectively create art.<sup>d</sup> Environmentalists strive to achieve these connections between humans and nature in order to protect the natural world. With the comprehensive understanding of the world around them dancers can achieve this balance. In addition, as artists they can become activists, visually inspiring others to find that same balance. A call for dancers as environmental activist is needed, because dancers as microcosms of the universe need nature in order to perpetuate their art, and nature needs all the allies it can get.

Before one can adequately address how to cultivate more allies of the environment through dance, it's important to understand the history of fall out between society and nature. Society became about human dominance as technologies developed and the altering of nature became more and more feasible. Humans saw themselves as a more powerful force than the kosmos and replaced the idea of interconnectivity between people and the world with one of division. Civilization in Europe drew lines between humans and nature, placing superior value on humanity.<sup>e</sup> Today's society has continued to perpetuate the mechanistic view of nature, and

taken it to a further degree. Ancient Greek concepts of microcosm still exist on a scientific level, but no longer as a way for humans to relate to the environment around them. Instead, much of today's society views the world in subconscious dualism, separating ideas into two opposite categories. Reason, science, and mechanization fall in the superior category as what is valued over things like emotion, connectivity, and nature, which exist in the seconded inferior category.<sup>f</sup> We are no longer connected with nature, but separated from it as superior intellectual beings. As a result our interactions with nature have decreased, and our understanding of nature as a part of us, a reflection of who we are, has disappeared. Nature, because of its disassociation with reason and science, became unimportant unless used as resource.

In light of this history of disconnection from nature one can see the necessity of reconnection in order to move away from our industrialized and over processed society. With this way of life as the norm we place pressure on the world's ecosystems, exhausting its resources through our endless chains of production, consumption, and disposal.<sup>g</sup> However, a fraction of today's society outside of the environmentalist community is still hypersensitive to connections between the human body and the world around it. A dancer spends their entire life searching for connection between themselves, their body, and space. Although all dancers may not be aware of the complex connections between their bodies, the universe, nature, and space, they have an innate understanding of connectivity. Just as the ancient Greek philosophers valued human bodies as reflections of the universe, so must a proficient dancer. They must value the human body as a universe that their art lives in. It is a form meant to move through space as a kosmos, a beautiful, organized, "little world" of its own.<sup>h</sup>

Further connections can be drawn between dancers and nature by looking deeper into the concept of dualism. Dualisms became society's way of determining value in early Europe and all things placed on the inferior side of a dualism were not only devalued but also associated with one another. Emotion, nature and connectivity were all inferior within a dualism and therefore associated. As dance is perceived as a natural and emotional act it can be placed within dualisms as inferior as well, therefore associating it with nature and all other inferior aspects of society. This history of being undervalued by early dualistic thinking unites the dancer with nature in an interesting way. Both nature and dance face a society that values their assets as less than the science, technology and development of the modern world. Dancers and environmental activists are fighting against the same engrained dualism within modern thought, and both wish for a reconnection with the world so that society can better understand dance, nature, and the universe. Thus the two groups, dancer and environmentalists must continue to help one another to reestablish out societal connection to nature and to reinvigorate a respect for the dancer, the human body, the natural world, and the universe.

To re-inspire a nation of people may seem like a lofty goal, but dancers and environmentalists have more commonalities on their side as tools. Artists within the dance world today are frequently recognizing the necessary connection between the dancer and nature. Anna Halprin, a renowned modern dancer and movement creator, demonstrates these connections in her work. Her approach to dance "integrates kinaesthetic exploration grounded in knowledge about the structure of the body, a sense of personal meaning and an awareness of the wider environment."<sup>1</sup> Halprin's work directly connects to nature as the creative process often begins with outdoor movement experience and connectivity of the body with space. Halprin is not alone



in her understanding of the importance of nature in the creation of dance. Many other artists explore these connections, along with how mind, body and spirit awareness can unite us with the universe.

The mind, body, and spirit connection implies that a dancer must be aware of all aspects of themselves. The mind and spirit are just as active in dance as the physical body. Contrary to what society may think, that dancers are merely physical beings, a dancer must be highly aware of movement, analyzing every aspect of the self. Each movement requires complex mental concentration and spiritual connection. Without an acute mind and a strong spirit a dancer cannot succeed. This multidimensional way of dancing involves the whole person and allows dancers an opportunity to connect with their environment. The environment in itself is a multidimensional force, full of complex ecosystems that require connections of all kinds between species. The ability of dancer to connect all aspects of the self in one act helps them better understand the complex capacities of an ecosystem and therefore comprehend complex environmental struggles.

In addition to the dancer's extensive understanding of their own physical being, a dancer also understands those around them, developing community. They rely on other artists to help them grow and learn, as well as for guidance and inspiration. The type of connection that a dancer can have with their body is rare, and it draws them into community with others who have that same connection. They value this community, as it is a reflection of themselves and their principles. Dance is by nature a communal art, one that cannot be practiced without a community of theirs to share it with. Dance needs community to create, perform and view the art. Halprin's work express this community building, and connects it to the earth. Her workshops, dance

experiences, and choreography play with elements of community, specifically the community that is the world around us.<sup>j</sup>

Since the time of post WWII industrialization western civilization has moved away from historical ideas of community towards a more isolated lifestyle. The industrialization that followed the war and the massive increase in population in cities drove people towards suburban living. Citizens wanted to leave the cities and move to homes in the suburbs. Urban sprawl, as the movement to create suburban communities is called, led to normalization of suburban life. People moved farther away from their neighbors as cookie cutter subdivisions and commuter cultures were created.<sup>k</sup> The result of the vast change in western living was isolation and the lessening of community values. As a result, in today's society community is not of value and not knowing your next door neighbor is commonplace. These problems have ties to environmental degradation, as studies have shown that community amongst neighbors creates a sense of care for the local environment.<sup>l</sup> Conversely, a lack of care for your community creates little appreciation for the community's environment. The average suburban community member has little to no interaction with neighbors, resulting in limited care for the shared environment, the nature, trees, grass, clean water, and pollutant levels.

Environmental activists see the solutions to issues of urban sprawl as education and activism, explaining to people and communities how their actions adversely effect the environment and how they can make positive changes. This seems like a useful tactic, but until people begin to consider the well rounded nature of their impacts on the earth, they will not change their lifestyles. Dancers understand well rounded approach, as they consider all aspects

of the self when practicing their art. These same principles can be applied to the environmental movement, as dancer size their potential to make positive environmental changes and influence others to do the same. In addition, a dancer's value of community creates capacity to help instill the features of community within suburbs of America. Ideally, the re-creation of community with the help of dancers will aid the environmental movement, as people learn to value their communities and aim to protect them.

During times of colonization nature has been seen as a place of fear, leading to attitudes of nature as an enemy, a force to be conquered, or a wild entity that needs to be mastered.<sup>m</sup> These ideas lead to industrialization and a disconnection from nature previously discussed. For example, industrialized food production created a disassociation between nature and food, as humans became separated physically and emotionally from where there food came from.<sup>n</sup> Political policy is largely responsible for the development of this disconnection, and the disregard for environmental thought within the realm of politics. Issues of the environment directly affect the future of our population and our functionality as a democratic nation. But the economy is of utmost importance in political discussions, no one talks about how alternative energy, smart urban development, increased public transportation, and many other nature protecting ideas can stimulate the economy and put people to work. All these issues are disregarded because they don't feel immediate or imperative. These struggles of the environmental movement are often similar to the struggles of a dancer, as art is commonly pushed aside as less important than other crafts.

These connections have become more important as time has gone on and the need to develop creative solutions to environmental problems has become vital. The environmental

movement needs to gain headway, and creative thinkers of the dance world with vast understanding of connectivity between the universe and the self are the key. Society needs new bold ideas to create a new wave of environmental action, and dancers and environmentalist in tandem have the capacity to do so. The creativity, community, and body, mind spirit connection of a dancer are all tools that can be used to further the cause of environmentalism and forge an alliance between dancers and environmentalist that will only help the future of nature.

- <sup>a</sup> Wayman, Alex. "The Human Body as Microcosm in India, Greek Cosmology, and Sixteenth-Century Europe." In *The History of Religions*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 172-190.
- <sup>b</sup> Merchant, Carolyn. "The Scientific Revolution and the Death of Nature." *ISIS* 97.3 (2006): 513-533.
- <sup>c</sup> Coleman, Annie Gilbert "The Rise of the House of Leisure: Outdoor Guides, Practical Knowledge, and Industrialization," *The Western Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 42, No. 4 (2011): 436-457.
- <sup>d</sup> Poynor, Helen. "Anna Halprin and the Sea Ranch Collective, an embodied engagement with place." *Journal Of Dance & Somatic Practices* 1.1 (2009): 121-132.
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- <sup>g</sup> Lenoard, Annie. "The Story of Stuff." *The Story of Stuff Project* December, 2012. <http://www.storyofstuff.org/movies-all/story-of-stuff/>.
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- <sup>j</sup> *Ibid* 1.1 (2009): 121-132.
- <sup>k</sup> Congdon, Chelsea. "Subdivide and Conquer: A Modern Western." Recorded 1991. Bullfrog Films. VHS
- <sup>l</sup> *Ibid*. Recorded 1991. Bullfrog Films. VHS
- <sup>m</sup> Merchant, Carolyn. "The Scientific Revolution and the Death of Nature." *ISIS* 97.3 (2006): 513-533. Print.
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<http://www.storyofstuff.org/movies-all/story-of-stuff/>.

Congdon, Chelsea. "Subdivide and Conquer: A Modern Western." Recorded 1991. Bullfrog Films. VHS

## SUMMARY OF DANCE STUDIES 2009-2012

### Orientation to Dance (Fall 2009)

- Discussion about the transition into LMU as a dance major
- Learning about the Wellness Lab, First Year Experience, Service Organizations, Greek Life, The Academic Resource Center, The Health Center, and other aspects of student life
- Learning about our classmates, sharing stories about dance, what we wanted out of LMU and how we got here

### Fund Dance Composition I/II (Fall 2009, Spring 2010)

- Learning the basics about dance composition
- Movement exercises, learning how to create concrete and abstract movements
- Developing and performing a solo dance study based on poses derived from sculptures
- Developing and performing a duet dance study based on sculptures
- Developing and performing a solo study using randomly selected music
- Developing and performing as solo study of your choice, personal style and music
- Learning the basics of contact improvisation
- Learning the basics of guided group improvisation
- Developing a vocabulary for describing and discussing dance
- Learning to write critically and thoughtfully about dance using learned dance vocabulary
- Exploring elements of Energy, Space and Time, and delving deeper into a creative project about one of these three

### Principles of Movement (Spring 2010)

- Learning to care for your body properly, using Bartenieff Fundamentals, basic Laban Analysis, Franklin Method, Pilates, Yoga, TheraBand, foam roller techniques and other methods
- Learning to center the body and the mind through guided mediation practices
- Learning basic partner and self massage techniques
- Discovering personal bodily limitations and other problems
- Gaining a basic understanding of exercises, the heart rate, and endurance versus weight loss training
- Analyzing personal alignment
- Basic discussion of anatomy

### Stagecraft for Dancers (Spring 2010)

- Gaining a basic understanding of the dance production industry, the different types of jobs available, and options for unions and representation
- Learning the basic of lighting and staging, different types of performance venues and stages, as well as types of lights
- Learning about all aspects of running a dance show, stage direction, costume management and design, and work as a deck hand
- Crewing the Student Dance Concert

**Laban Movement Analysis (Fall 2010)**

- Discovering the Laban concepts of Effort, Shape, and Space
- Learning the basic of Laban Notation
- Learning the Bartenieff Fundamentals of Total Body Connectivity
- Developing movement to demonstrate understanding of these ideas
- Further understanding these concepts through explorative improvisation
- Discovering personal movement style
- Learning to view, discuss, analyze and write about your personal movement
- Learning to view, discuss and analyze others movement within the context of Laban Notation
- Reflecting on personal dance styles and expression through LMA in journal writing

**Principles of Teaching Dance (Fall 2010)**

- Learning the basics of teaching dance, especially in a school classroom setting
- Understanding the patterns of brain development in children and how to further development through dance education
- Understanding the importance, necessity, and vulnerability of dance in public schools
- Learning a variety of dance composition lesson techniques
- Developing the ability to creating lesson plans incorporating different aspects of dance, such as Technique, Composition and Culture
- Creating a variety for practice lesson plans, and team teaching them to a group of students
- Compiling a dance resume and CV of all dance and work experience

**Dance Styles & Forms (Spring 2011)**

- Applying the skills developed in Fundamentals of Dance Composition and Laban Movement Analysis towards creating movement studies
- Learning the basics of composing to music, including learning music vocabulary and how it affects dance
- Creating several music studies applying this knowledge, working as a soloist and in groups
- Creating a site specific dance study to show the culmination of composition experience

**History Dance Theatre (Spring 2011)**

- Learning the chronological history of the development of all dance forms: ballet, tap, jazz, world dance, modern, post modern, and contemporary
- Gaining a knowledge of the famous key players in dance history and how they effected the dance forms of today
- Understanding the social, cultural, and historical impacts of dance on society
- Learning through various mediums, biographies, memoires, academic readings, documentaries and dance on film
- Culminating with a essay exploring one important aspect of historical dance

**Choreographers Workshop (Spring 2011 as a non-choreographer)**

- Witnessing the chorographic process of my peers
- Learning how to be in a workshop setting and adapting to work that is always changing
- Taking constructive critique from teacher and peers based on showings of work
- Working with a choreographer to create their visions
- Performing the work shopped and finished piece



**To Dance Is Human (Fall 2011)**

- Understanding the concepts of Dance, Society, and Culture as separate ideas, as well as how they affect one another
- Reading, watching, and sharing stories of dance as part of a variety societies and cultures
- Creating a better understanding of your own personal culture and society
- Learning to view dance as an opportunity for a bridge between societies and cultures, but also as an individual form of expression for different societies and cultures
- Developing personal stories of dance, society and culture
- And critically thinking, reading, writing, and discussing Dance, Culture and Society

**Kinesiology for Dancers I/II (Fall 2011, Spring 2012)**

- Gaining a basic knowledge of the cellular systems of the body, how the human body works on a molecular level
- Learning the basic anatomy of the human body, including muscles, bones, ligaments, and tendons
- Studying all the major parts of the body, skull, spine, pelvis, arms, hands, legs, and feet
- Learning all the major working muscles, the origins, insertions and attachments
- Applying this knowledge to dance, in order to assist our technique and understating of our bodies
- Developing an understanding of how to create a healthy body for dance
- Using this information to analyzes our personal body and its issue within dance

**Pilates (Fall 2009 to Spring 2012)**

- Learning the practice of Pilates, how to use the reformer and other equipment to do Pilates exercises
- Learning how to use Pilates and other wellness tools to create a more balanced body
- Improving technique, alignment, turnout and strength in order to increase ability within dance classes
- Developing the skills to correct your own physical issues or limitations through strengthening, realignment, or loosening of muscles

**Technique Classes****Ballet**

- Developing consistent and accurate ballet technique
- Having a solid understanding of all ballet positions, being able to execute them accurately
- Knowledge of ballet vocabulary, spelling and translated meanings
- Coordinated use of the whole body, being able to isolate one part from another and move them all in unison if required
- Mastering barre work, plie, tendu, frappe, rond de jambe, degage, fondu, and grand battement
- Mastering center floor work, such as petite allegro, grand allegro, and adagio
- Increasing turnout, flexibility strength and stability in all ballet exercises

**Modern**

- Learning various modern styles and techniques, such as release technique, counter technique, Graham, Horton and Limon
- Developing key technical skills, such as working from parallel, executing inversions, using the floor for movement, partnering and weight sharing, and improvisation
- Learning to embody all movement qualities when the work requires it
- Engaging the full Mind and Body in class, being able to dance with the whole person

- Learning various combinations and phrases, and being exposed to repertoire work from professional choreographers

#### **Jazz**

- Learning basic Jazz technique, center floor exercise, across the floor exercises, and choreography
- Learning to adapt to various styles of Jazz, Classical, Old School Jazz, Jazz Funk, Contemporary, Musical Theatre, and other styles
- Gaining flexibility and strength to improve technique, executing all steps clearly and precisely
- Gaining performance experience, bringing showmanship and artistry to all choreography and exercises

#### **Tap**

- Learning and perfecting complex tap sounds and combinations, clarifying sounds
- Delving into rhythm tap exercises, learning, executing and memorizing a variety of steps with focusing on the rhythmic sounds of the taps
- Improving auditory and visual skills by picking up on tap rhythms
- Learning about the history to tap dance, famous dancers of the past and present, and watching tap dance videos

#### **Musical Theatre**

- Combining singing acting and dancing skills, learning to use all three at once
- Developing singing skills and endurance throughout whole dance numbers
- Learning dance routines and adding character
- Studying famous musicals
- Performing a musical theater duet
- Performing a musical theater solo
- Performing a monologue

#### **World Dance**

- Learning the rhythms, stories and cultural dances of the regions of Africa and the Caribbean
- Learning to execute polyrhythm's within the body, mimicking traditional Caribbean music
- Learning basic African drumming, traditional dances, and songs

#### **Jazz Dance Coaching**

- Assessing personal technical issues within Jazz dance
- Working to perfect issues and gaining better balance, clarity, and strength in movement
- Specifically working on technique in pirouettes, being more expressive with my whole body, dancing with more clarity, and using focus more effectively

## AESTHETIC STATEMENT

As a human being I find that I appreciate beauty in many things. I see beauty in the world, in the classroom, in an individual dancer, and in all forms of art. I have found that my love of beauty, by whatever definition you give the word, stems from my love of self expression. My form of self expression is dance, and therefore I find dance to be one of the most beautiful things in this world. The reason I dance is to express my love of it and to create beauty of my own. The study of movement is not commonly considered an academic, philosophical, or educational study, although my study of the subject would lead me to disagree. However, what dance clearly offers to the world is aesthetics. As an incredibly pleasing art form it is universally acknowledged as beautiful. Each culture, religion, community, and individual person has their own ideas of what is aesthetically pleasing, but I think all would agree that dance strikes a chord as beautiful.

The highest ideal of beauty in dance is the professional field. I admire those dancers who have made it to this level. Out of all the professional work that I have seen the work that represents the ideal I would aim to achieve is Alvin Ailey Dance Company. In the few times that I have been lucky enough to see them perform I have always admired their impeccable technique. Alvin Ailey dancers have always been incredibly talented and inspiring to watch. Although I do not desire to become a professional dancer in the immediate future, I still find their work inspiring. In my training I always aimed to achieve their level of skill. As a tap dancer I have always admired famous tappers throughout history. They present an entirely different idea of what beauty is, and I find watching them to be captivating. Bill Robinson and his stair dance is something I have always admired and the Nicholas Brothers tap dance scene in *Stormy Weather* is by far my favorite performance to watch. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers are enjoyable to



watch as well in the old footage of them dancing together. The styles of tap dance that each of these dancers performs is very different, but their emphasis on rhythm, clarity and style have always caught my eye.

My love of these dancers and my dance aesthetic is directly affected by the other interests in my life. During my time at LMU I have realized that dance was not my only passion. My passion for the environment has translated into my second major and has impacted my love of dance. My thesis work has helped me to explore my love of this subject and dance as a unit. The understanding of the natural world and its problems has helped me make unexpected connections in life. I now see how dance and dancers can have a direct impact on the environment and how both groups can learn from one another. My interest in both subjects has increased in unison and helped me gain appreciation for beauty in dance and in nature. Dance has become about more than just movement too me, it is a direct connection to the world around us. When I move I think about myself in relation the rest of the universe and how my actions mimic its. I only discovered this outlook through my dual studies, and my feelings about the natural world would never have infiltrated my dance aesthetic otherwise.

There are aspects of dance that I do not find as aesthetically beautiful, like dances that reflect the post modern style. For me dance is a continuation of movements that express an idea. I find it hard to connect to movement that does not have a continuous flow or a feeling of un-interruption. When dance is choppy and in pieces that don't have any moments of clarity I tend to disconnect from it. My favorite style of dance is lyrical, so when dance does not reflect any of the qualities of lyrical dance I find it less pleasing to the eye as well. Classical ballet, although lyrical in many ways, does not speak to my aesthetic feelings either. This is most likely due to my personal relationship with ballet as a dance form. It has always been my least favorite style to

practice, providing me with frustrations and self doubt. These feeling affect my view of the style, and as a result I have a hard time finding a connection to ballet and its aesthetic values.

Additionally, Music plays an important role in my aesthetic preferences and in my life. Outside of my experience as a dancer I have always found music to be captivating. It provides inspiration, enjoyment, and relaxation and can conjure any emotions you can imagine. Music has the incredible power to recall memories and heighten emotions. In these ways in contributes to my life, and to my dancing. In dance music can be used in many ways. I find the most value in music that is complementary to the piece. I enjoy melodic sounds that stir up emotions and elevate the dance experience. Music that intentionally contradicts dance is not as valuable in my aesthetic and makes it harder for me to enjoy a piece.

The level of technique demonstrated in a piece is also a factor in my enjoyment of dance. Technique is something that I have always admired in dancers given that it is not my strongest quality. So when I see a dancer with flawless technique that makes even the hardest movement looks easy, I find it beautiful. Clean and precise technique is one of the most beautiful things a dancer can achieve. However, it is not the most important characteristic of dance to me. Beyond technique, I value artistry, individuality, and performance quality. If a dance is technically accurate, but the dancer provides no individuality, expression, or emotion I will not see the beauty as easily. Since dance is such a human art it is important that the person dancing it brings humanity to it. An emotionless dance will never be aesthetically pleasing to me. The combination of both technique and emotion creates the most beauty in dance. If a dancer can provide both of these than they fit with my aesthetic. Beyond this a dancer does not need to embody and other precise qualities. I find all shapes and size s of people to be compelling to watch if they exemplify the technique and performance ability expressed above.

The choreography of dance has a powerful impact on its beauty as well; there are certain styles of dance that I find more appealing to watch than others. I will always enjoy softer lyrical work, as well as rhythmic tap numbers. These are two of my favorite things to watch. I find contemporary work compelling as well, given that its choreography incorporates aspects of both lyrical and tap. Contemporary choreography uses lyrical movements but applies sharper gestures on top of them, in a way that I believe mimics the complex rhythms of tap dance. When choreography is well thought out, and diverse within these styles I find it beautiful. In addition, I enjoy moments of individual movement and chaos on stage, but it is my preference to see them unified by instances of unison as well. If a dance is too scattered then I will not enjoy it as much. Moments of unison are among my favorite things to watch in choreography, when all the dancers come together they convey the same ideas through the same movement. I think it is incredibly powerful and strengthens a dance as a whole. Overall, each dance has a style of its own and can be beautiful to any number of people, and I can respect that. However these are the aspects of dance that I find the most beautiful.



## MOVING TO A CITY: LAS VEGAS

Scenario: Moving to the Paradise or Henderson area of Las Vegas, Nevada and working at the United States Green Building Council in Las Vegas. Additionally, teaching at a nearby dance studio.

The following pages provide details:

- Map of the USGBC office location (817 S Main St.)
- USGBC Nevada webpage
- Listing for a 2 bedroom home nearby (1610 Crystal Shadows Circle)
- Directions from home to the office
- A list of nearby dance studios

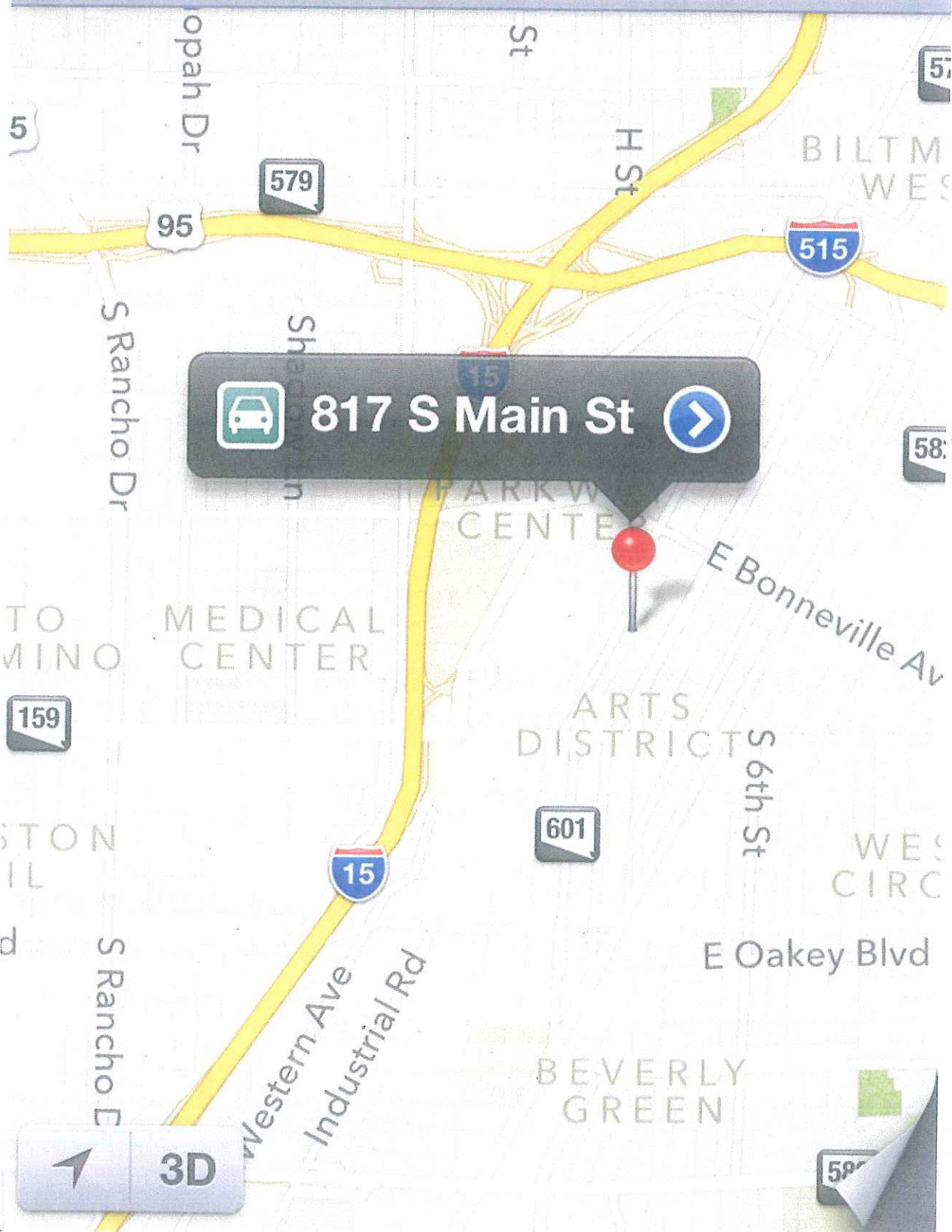
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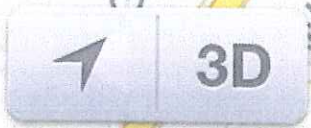
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**CHAPTER VISION:**

Nevada is a model for sustainable buildings and communities and is renowned in the region for its outstanding quality of life.

**CHAPTER MISSION:**

The U.S. Green Building Council - Nevada Chapter advocates adoption of sustainable codes, implementation of sustainable construction practices for existing and new buildings and access to sustainable education throughout the state.

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[In the News: Nevada earns spot with best in green](#)

[Nevada Makes USGBC's List of 2012 Top States for LEED](#)

[USGBC Launches Green Building Information Gateway](#)

[Green Homes Continue to Grow Across the U.S.](#)

[The Home Depot and U.S. Green Building Council Launch New Database of Green Building Products](#)

FRIENDS

Many thanks to all Friends of the Chapter:

GOLD



LAS VEGAS VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

SILVER



UPCOMING EVENTS

**USGBC Nevada May Breakfast Meeting**

14 May 2013 7:00 AM • Las Vegas Springs Preserve - Desert Living Center Conference Room • Introduction to LEED v4

**USGBC Nevada June Breakfast Meeting**

11 Jun 2013 7:00 AM • Las Vegas Springs Preserve - Desert Living Center Conference Room

**Energy Management Congress**

19 Jun 2013 10:00 AM • Las Vegas Convention Center, North Hall N1

**USGBC Nevada July Breakfast Meeting**

09 Jul 2013 7:00 AM • Las Vegas Springs Preserve - Desert Living Center Conference Room

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the U.S. Green Building Council - Nevada Chapter website.



2



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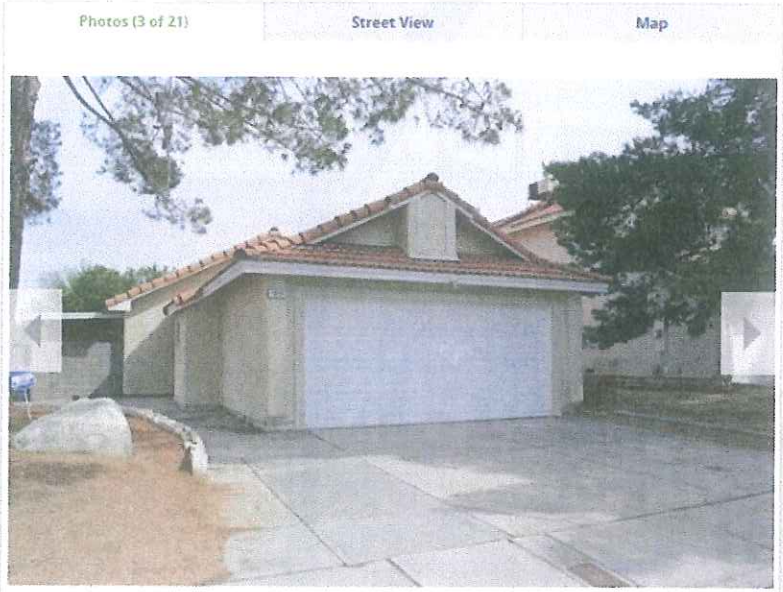
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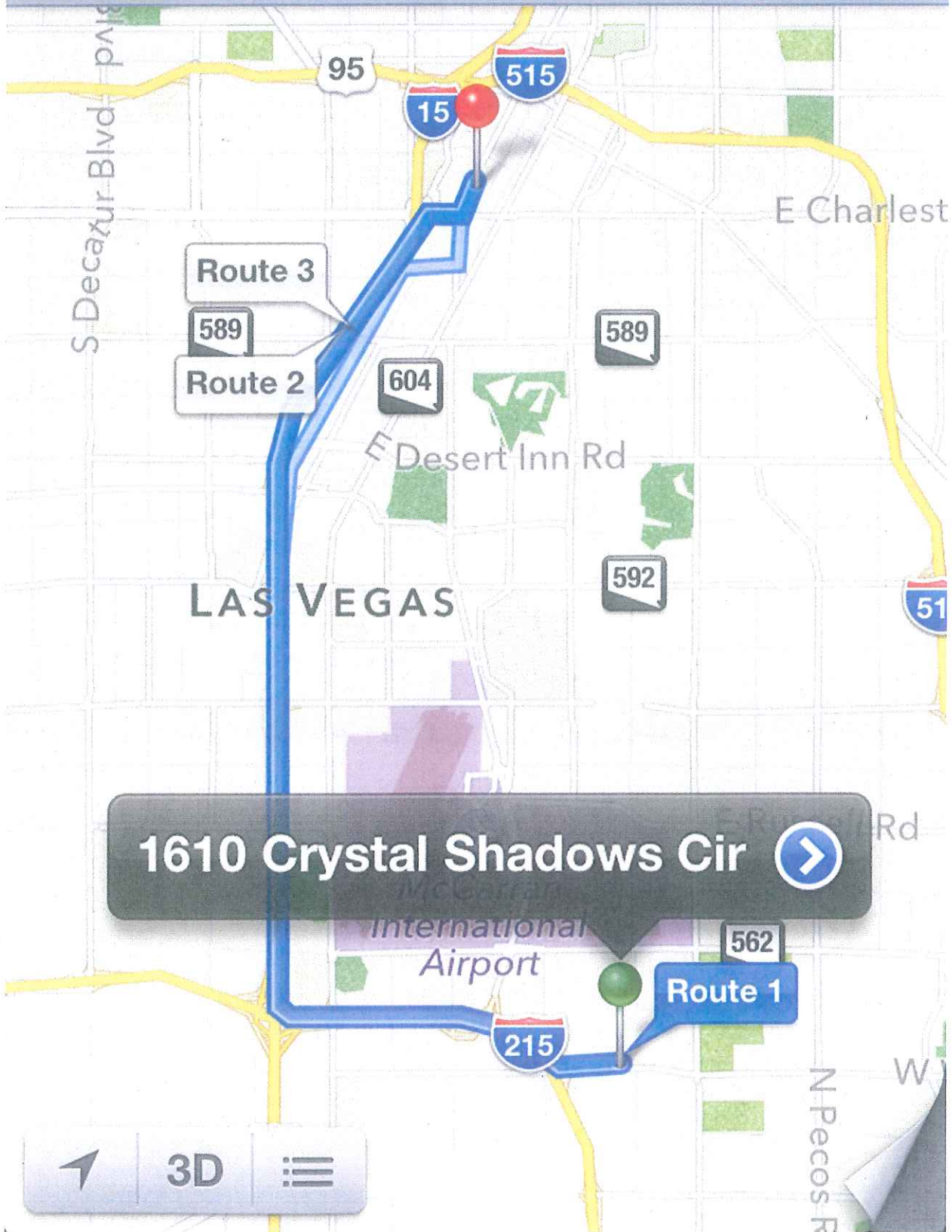


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1st of 3 Suggested Routes  
17 minutes - 10.5 miles

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1610 Crystal Shadows Cir



3D



Dance Studios Round, Paradise, NV 89123 - Yelp

www.yelp.com/search?cflt=dancestudio&find\_loc=Paradise%2C+NV - 10+ items - Top Dance Studios in Paradise Pole Fitness Studio, DISTRICT... 7.5 Miles 6. Dance Charisma Dance Schools, Dance Studios 5.1 Miles 8. Rhythmic Souls 5.0 star rating 2 reviews

Dance Charisma

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D 3285 E Patrick Ln Las Vegas (702) 458-7676
E 700 E Silverado Ranch Blvd Las Vegas (702) 341-7625
F 4285 Anville St Las Vegas (702) 878-7653
G 6889 S Las Vegas Blvd Las Vegas (702) 821-5017



Map for dance studios in paradise NV

Dance studios in Paradise | Las Vegas, NV - YP.com

www.yellowpages.com/paradise-las-vegas-nv/dance-studios - Results 1 - 30 of 134 - 134 listings of Dancing Instruction in Las Vegas on YP.com. Find reviews, directions & phone numbers for the best dance studios in ...

Step by Step Dance Studio in Paradise, NV - azcentral.com



