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DANC 461: Sr. Thesis Project

DANCE AND DISABILITY:

A Look at Integrated Dance as Art and Therapy, and its
Impact on Society

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Mentor:

Teresa Heiland, Ph. D.



In partial fulfillment of
The Bachelor of Arts Degree in Dance
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DANCE AND DISABILITY:

A Look at Integrated Dance as Art and Therapy, and its Impact on Society

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DANCE AND DISABILITY:

A Look at Integrated Dance as Art and Therapy, and its Impact on Society

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Mentor:

Teresa Heiland, Ph.D.

Dance and Disability: A Look at Integrated Dance as Art and Therapy, and its Impact on Society is a research thesis. For my thesis, I set out to discover exactly what integrated dance is and how it is considered to be both therapy and art. I incorporated research on how integrated dance is viewed by society, as well as a section on how to spread education on disability. My thesis also includes a detailed description of an interview with Occupational Therapist, Nicole Palminteri, as well as my personal reflection on the research I discovered and the topic in general.

In conducting my research, I used many secondary sources including books, journals, conference proceedings, videos, and newspaper reviews. I also incorporated research from dance company websites. My research discoveries were confirmed by my primary source, an occupational therapist in the field. Ultimately, my thesis not only introduces the idea of integrated dance, but it also proves how it can be considered both an art and therapy.

DANCE AND DISABILITY:

A look at Integrated Dance as Art and Therapy, and its Impact on Society.

INTRODUCTION:

Dance and Disability: How do they coincide?

Dance.

In its most basic form, dance is the movement of the body in a progression of steps that is typically accompanied by music. To the average person, dance is considered to be a fun activity that is done socially. It is also seen as a form of entertainment. But when asking a true dancer what it means to dance, the definition goes much deeper. For a dancer, dance is a way of communicating emotions through movements of the body without the use of words. It is an expressive art that tells a story; a language in a league of its own. For many, it is a way of life. Because it is an art form that is put on display for the eyes of the public, dance is frequently criticized by both professional dancers and non dancers alike. As a result, many biased opinions are created in regards to what it takes to be a dancer, as well as what it takes to look like a dancer. Through these opinions, stereotypical images of dancers are born.

Disability.

According to its definition, disability is a condition, either physical or mental, that limits one's senses, movements, or activities. A disability can affect the way a person goes about every day tasks, but it does not define who that person is. In combining the idea of dance with disability, one would at first believe that the two do not mix. Because of this stereotypical image of a dancer in society, most of the general public does not believe that those with disabilities meet the criteria. A person with a disability is seen as his or her disability instead of as an ordinary human being. This is where dance challenges that notion.

Today, there are numerous dance companies such as, AXIS Dance Company, Joint Forces Dance Company/DanceAbility, The Gimp Project, and CandoCo Dance Company, that allow individuals to explore with their disabilities and forget about what it is that they cannot do. Instead, the focus is on the uniqueness of each individual, which allows movement to be created based on an individual's distinctive qualities. Because of these companies, those with various kinds of disabilities are not only provided with an outlet for expression, but are also given the opportunity to perform in public. This enables them to be seen by the world as dancers and human beings instead of as disabled bodies. Due to the fact that the dancers in these companies are both able-bodied and disabled dancers, a collaboration, along with a sense of community is formed between the two groups. This collision and synthesis of the two groups is known today as integrated dance. As a result of its growing popularity, the individual companies, through workshops and courses held throughout the world, have made large efforts to spread their expansive knowledge and education on integrated dance.

Originally founded by Thais Mazur in 1987, AXIS Dance Company was one of the first companies to combine both able-bodied and disabled dancers together in one work. After being well received by the public for its first ever performance in 1988, the company rapidly grew in popularity and began to perform in cities throughout the United States, as well as overseas in Europe and Siberia. Because the concept of joining together dancers with and without disabilities had never really been explored before, many doors were opened for those with the desire to move and create expression through their bodies. As a result of its fast growing popularity, AXIS Dance Company not only did performances, but began to teach classes and hold dance forums so that people of all ages and abilities could find their inner dancer. After a change in direction in 1997 with new co-directors Judith Smith and Nicole Richter, AXIS took its idea to a whole new level. More educational classes were taught and eventually an outreach program separate from the company was formed and called "Dance Access and Dance Access/KIDS!" (AXIS Dance Company, 2010).

After attending a number of Dance Access classes, Wyatt Bessing, a writer and educator with spina bifida, explains his eye opening experience in a brief article called "Balance and Freedom: Dancing in from the Margins of Disability." In the few times that he attended the classes, Bessing discovered that Dance Access allowed him to overcome his self-consciousness and "create a fluid dialog" with the other able-bodied and disabled dancers around him (Jackson, 2008). Exploring with both individual movement and contact improvisation, Bessing was able to see a whole other side to himself and those around him.

In one instance of contact improv with co-director Nicole Richter, Bessing found himself in a moment of complete stability, which is something he is unable to obtain on a day-to-day basis. After this discovery through counterbalance, Bessing says, "An entire world opened up in that tiny place of balance" (Jackson, 2008). Because of the little moments like this, Bessing was able to see himself in a brand new light. He was able to break free from his metal braces that entrapped his legs, and ultimately discover how to move with his body naturally instead of fighting against it in an attempt to blend in with the rest of society. Overall, Bessing explains that "through dance, those with disabilities created more vivid, personal expressions of their lived experience than would words alone" (Jackson, 2008).

Understandably, those involved in AXIS Dance Company and the Dance Access classes were enthralled by this new collaboration of bodies, but what did the public have to say? According to a review by Allan Ulrich, a San Francisco Chronicle Dance Correspondent from the SFGate (part of the San Francisco Chronicle), "the quality of the dancing takes your breath away" (Ulrich, 2009). He says that the dancers contain a "fierce commitment" to all of their movements, and through the choreography and the dancers' relationships with one another, a true community is formed on the stage (Ulrich, 2009). Bruce Weber, a writer for the New York Times explains that, "AXIS's work instructs the viewer in how to appreciate it, and the lesson is delivered with cogent force: Sympathy is irrelevant. Forget what isn't here, and pay attention to what is" (Weber, 2009). Ultimately, Weber proves the point that no matter the physical make up of a person, dancing can still be done in more ways than many believe to be possible. AXIS Dance Company explores these

ways and in the long run produces captivating art that shows the world just what dance is about.

Around the same time as the founding of AXIS Dance Company and with word spreading fast about this new concept of integrated dance, a man by the name of Alito Alessi and his partner Karen Nelson, the original directors of Joint Forces Dance company, decided to hold their own workshop for everyone and anyone who had a desire and love for dance. Their goal was to make dance accessible for all, and that is exactly what they did in their creation of the DanceAbility workshops. In a short article Alessi wrote called "Dance and Disability," he explains how dance to him is not based on physicality, but on attitude. He says that "All bodies have both ability and disability but neither defines people's potential for relating and building a sense of self-worth and community through dance" (Jackson, 2008). Like Dance Access, the DanceAbility workshops enable people from all walks of life to explore with their own bodies without the feeling of being judged. They can interact with those around them and create relationships through their movement. This not only builds a sense of community, but it allows those with disabilities to feel like they belong. The disabled dancers are able to embrace and love their bodies and share their uniqueness with the rest of the world. After partaking in one of Alessi's DanceAbility workshops, a participant said:

We people with handicaps are not used to people loving our bodies. Normally what you learn as handicapped people is that people are looking at what is missing, what doesn't work, and nobody is looking at what is here and what we can do. This work really supports a different view: I learned to look for what is here and work with that. You give people back love for their bodies, and do that by moving, by playing and developing more possibilities to move (Jackson, 2008).

Due to its growing popularity, what was the simple and local DanceAbility soon turned into DanceAbility International, or DAI for short. In 1997, after Alessi administered the very first DanceAbility Teacher Certification course, people all over the world began to spread the ideas of integrated dance. Through the teachings of the DanceAbility workshops, people began to change their "preconceived ideas about disabilities," and opened their eyes to a whole new world of education and performance (DanceAbility International, 2010). Today, DanceAbility International continues to inspire people in over nineteen different countries through its performances, educational workshops on integrated dance, and teacher training.

The Gimp Project, originally founded by Heidi Latsky in November of 2008, approaches dance and disability in a more courageous and "in your face" kind of way. The dancers in this company all have "unique limbs ranging from overly agile joints, absent limbs, foreshortened limbs, crooked limbs to exceptionally overdeveloped muscles" (Latsky, 2011) No matter their physicality, the dancers take their unique bodies and manipulate them in provocative and dynamic ways so as to challenge the audience's view of dance, beauty, and body image. Overall, "the company tackles the issues of 'integrated' dance with a

vengeance, touching on sexuality, intimacy and the vulnerability and anger associated with being constantly watched and judged" (Latsky, 2011).

In some cases, the dancers of Gimp will make verbal jokes on stage and mimic some of the preconceptions that audience members tend to have before seeing the show. Lawrence Carter-Long, a 42 year old man with cerebral palsy, does just this in a piece called "Two Men Walking" with able-bodied dancer, Jeffrey Freeze. At the start of the piece, Carter-Long is standing center stage and says to the audience, "Three cripples walk into a bar..." He then turns around to begin walking upstage (Latsky, 2007). The joke is never finished. This is a powerful moment because it immediately forces the members of the audience to think about their own personal notions of dance and disability. Prior to performing "Two Men Walking," Carter-Long "had never imagined himself as a dancer," but Latsky, on the other hand, thought that his "gait" was extraordinary, and she therefore created the piece solely on the way he walked (Associated Press, 2009). Because Latsky pushed so hard and never gave up on her vision, Lawrence Carter-Long, along with the other dancers involved in Latsky's company, were transformed from ordinary human beings with disabilities into beautiful, professional dancers. Theodore Bale, in his review of Heidi Latsky and her company in *Dance Magazine*, sums up the work of The Gimp Project in one sentence by saying, "GIMP is without doubt a gleaming milestone in the progress of contemporary dance and theatre proving that the term 'disabled dancer' is an oxymoron" (Bale, 2009).

The final company to be discussed is CandoCo Dance Company. Founded in 1991 by Celeste Dandeker and Adam Benjamin, contrary to the other companies that came before it, CandoCo Dance Company was created as a result of the workshops that Dandeker and Benjamin held to spread the education of integrated dance. Although the other companies toured outside of the United States, CandoCo was the first integrated dance company to be formed in the United Kingdom. Surpassing DanceAbility International, CandoCo "toured over 50 countries visiting Europe, Australia, North and South America, Asia and Africa" in less than fifteen years (CandoCo Dance Company, 2011). Just like the other companies mentioned, CandoCo has also made large efforts to spread the education of integrated dance throughout the United Kingdom. With their use of "extensive Learning and Development projects and activities," CandoCo presently shares their knowledge and understanding of integrated dance with over 12,000 people per year (CandoCo Dance Company, 2011). Summed up in a brief quotation from *The Guardian*:

CandoCo reinvented the boundaries of dance by proving that virtuosity wasn't confined to the able bodied. They perform work of poignant grace and shocking physical bravado. They also stripped disability art of its last vestiges of political correctness (CandoCo Dance Company, 2011).

POSING QUESTION:

Integrated Dance: Is it Art or Therapy? Or both?

In all four of the companies previously discussed, integrated dance is used as a means of entertainment and performance. It is transformed into a spectacle where the dancers are put on display for the enjoyment and experience of the audience members. This causes integrated dance to be considered an art. But with the inclusion of the workshops and classes, integrated dance is also able to fall under the category of therapy. By definition, therapy is a treatment intended to relieve or heal a disorder. While disabilities cannot necessarily be healed, various actions can be taken to help overcome some of the difficulties presented in every day activities. Because dance is all about movement of the body, it is an effective way for those with physical disabilities to get in touch with their bodies. The numerous techniques in dance that are used to help professionals perfect their abilities can also be used by those with disabilities to help gain more mobility and stability in their own bodies.

A prime example of dance as therapy is Gregg Mozgala. As a man with cerebral palsy, Mozgala has difficulties performing every day movement functions. Due to the brain's inability to send the correct signals to the muscles, a basic function such as walking cannot be performed in a normal manner (Genzlinger, 2009). Like Lawrence Carter-Long from The Gimp Project, Mozgala has a "gait" unique to his body and the severity of his disability. Unlike most people who walk heel-toe with the feet facing almost directly forward and the body held upright, Mozgala's cerebral palsy causes him to walk in a much different way. In an article from the New York Times, Mozgala explains that when he walks he is "up on his toes, lower extremities turned in, seesawing from side to side to maintain balance", while his upper body curls back and up to overcompensate and fight the pull of gravity (Genzlinger, 2009). Although Mozgala went through many years of physical therapy to try and develop more stability in his walk, he was unsuccessful. However, everything changed when Mozgala met and worked with choreographer, Tamar Rogoff.

Having little knowledge of cerebral palsy, with no intention on "learning too much", Rogoff approached working with Mozgala in a unique manner. Because she did not know the severity of his condition, she did not have any preconceived notions regarding what Mozgala could or could not do. This enabled them to explore movement with an open mind free of expectations. With her strong dance background and knowledge of the inner workings of the body, Rogoff was able to teach Mozgala specific dance techniques that helped him discover "individual bones, muscles, and tendons that he had no command of before" (Genzlinger, 2009). One technique in particular made a profound impact on his walk. After about thirty minutes of practicing this "tension-shaking release technique", Mozgala was able to walk with much more stability with his feet "flat on the ground" (Genzlinger, 2009). Through continuing work with the dance techniques, Mozgala was able to "feel" his muscles and change the patterning in his brain. After a period of about eight months, Mozgala was on stage with three other dancers performing an hour long work created by Rogoff. In this case, not only did dance act as a means of physical therapy,

but it also helped Mozgala to create a more positive image of himself. Because of his work with Rogoff, not only was Mozgala able to train his body to walk normally, but he was also able view himself in a different light. He no longer defined himself by his disability and how it made him move, but instead embraced his uniqueness and approached every day functions in a new way.

In a broader sense, dance enables those with disabilities to venture into new experiences with their bodies and develop new relationships with both their own bodies and the bodies of others. The freedom of movement allows for the disabled-bodied dancers to figure out their limits in terms of movement and to be a part of something that is bigger than themselves. Not only does dance provide awareness of the body for disabled-bodied dancers, but it also provides a better understanding of disability to those with able-bodies. Because integrated dance relies heavily on contact improvisation, able-bodied and disabled-bodied dancers are forced to work together to create movement. This method of movement "encourage[s] touch and close physical contact," which "quickly leads to a better understanding and trust between" the two groups of dancers (Tomkins, 1993). For David Toole, a disabled-bodied dancer for CandoCo Dance Company, integrated dance provides him with the opportunity to "let go of frustrations accumulated over the last 28 years". The "therapeutic qualities" of dance, and his participation in the company, enable him to be "involved in a group activity", which is something he never considered because his disability made him an outsider (Tomkins, 1993). Therefore, not only does dance provide an outlet for physical therapy and an outlet for expression, but it also provides a sense of belonging, which is often not felt by those with disabilities. Although it cannot reverse a disability, dance has the power to allow those with disabilities to feel a sense of freedom; a "freedom to play and seek new physical forms, to feel themselves buoyant and resilient, fearless and beautiful in their dance" (Tomkins, 1993).

Dance Movement Therapy:

Dance as Therapy for People with Down's Syndrome:

Dance movement therapy can also be used for those who have other disabilities such as Down's Syndrome. In a case such as this, children or adults with Down's Syndrome experience issues like "poor balance, frequent impulsive movements, overuse of strength, poor self-esteem and poor body boundaries" (Watney, 1993). In order to understand how dance movement therapy, or DMT for short, can assist in developmental growth and growth in movement capabilities for those with Down's Syndrome, the definition of DMT must be established. According to the Association of Dance Movement Therapy: "DMT is the use of expressive movement and dance as a medium through which the individual can engage creatively in a process of personal integration and growth. It is founded on the principles that movement reflects an individual's patterns of thinking and feeling" (Watney, 1993). Dance movement therapy is especially effective for those with Down's Syndrome because it relies on movement of the body as a means of communication. In general, Down's

Syndrome often presents those with the disability with difficulties regarding verbal communication because language is not fully developed.

“Movement, developmentally the first form of communication, is the starting point of all other forms of communication. Many elements such as posture, gesture, body attitude and facial expression come together to form a unique language predating and surpassing verbal expression. Because of this early developmental origin, movement has the capacity to connect with unconscious material from the past and present” (Watney, 1993).

In dance movement therapy sessions for a person with Down's Syndrome, the therapist starts out spending time performing a technique called “empathetic mirroring”. In this process, the therapist imitates the movements, intentions and emotions of the client in order to provide the client with an example of how he or she acts. This helps the client to form a better understanding of his or her own body and how it acts in space. It also teaches the therapist a lot about the client's level of development and the extent that he or she needs to work in order to create a change or make progress in the client's development. This technique also creates a relationship or bond between the therapist and the client. There is a certain trust and understanding that is formed between the two that enables growth to occur within the client. Through this relationship, the role of leadership can eventually be passed off from the therapist to the client. Once the mirroring exercise is practiced for a proper period of time, the client is able to take over the leadership position because he or she has developed a new sense of independence and individuality. Once this step is reached, the therapist can work towards providing a greater “movement repertoire to enable new feelings and ways of relating to develop” (Watney, 1993). Ultimately, through this new movement, the client can get more in touch with his or her own body and therefore connect it to his or her surroundings. This enables the client to feel more like an individual and provides more independence.

Overall, children and adults with Down's Syndrome have difficulty controlling their emotions and movements. They act on impulses, and because these impulses are constantly changing, so are their moods and actions. These impulses cause those with Down's Syndrome to act and respond without thinking. They react quickly in an “effort to get tasks completed” (Watney, 1993). Through dance movement therapy, children and adults can explore different ways of expressing themselves through movement and therefore learn and understand appropriate ways to demonstrate their thoughts and feelings. This not only helps the children and adults to better understand their own emotions, but it also enables them to become better communicators.

Dance movement therapy is also particularly important for those with Down's Syndrome because of their lack of spatial awareness and distortion of body-image. Due to their uncertainty in terms of how they fit into their environment, “body-boundaries” are created, which hinder the ability to move through space properly and effectively. Through DMT, children and adults with Down's Syndrome can do movement exercises that help them to discover the different parts of their body and their relation to space. They can learn

how the different joints of their body work and therefore discover limitations in their own bodies. They can also get a sense of how to compensate for these limitations and work around them. Right along with body misconception, those with Down's Syndrome often do not have a sense of their own weight and how it affects others. They are clumsy and not grounded into the floor. With dance movement therapy, strength can be increased through pushing and pulling exercises and interactive movement with the therapist. This provides those with Down's Syndrome with a sense of balance that is not normally felt in everyday activities. The increase in strength also results in the ability to maintain a center of gravity in the body. Developing this center of gravity enables the children and adults to better understand their bodies and their movement capabilities, which in turn helps with everyday functions (Watney, 1993).

All in all, dance movement therapy is an affective method of therapy that can provide an overall understanding of oneself. Depending on the level of development of the individual with Down's Syndrome, dance movement therapy can be broken down and specified to meet the needs of the individual. It enables the individual to develop a sense of independence as well as a sense of place in his or her environment. Dance movement therapy is not only a way to get in touch with one's own thoughts and feelings, but it is also a way to express them appropriately. This helps the individual to gain control of his or her body and emotions, which helps in the process of development. In general, this type of therapy enables those with Down's Syndrome to better create relationships with other people. Starting with their therapist, those with the disability can develop a trust for other people and therefore feel more comfortable interacting in a more public setting. This new trust, combined with the development of balance and a center of gravity, as well as the development of spatial awareness, work together to prepare the individual for life outside of therapy.

ANSWER:

Integrated dance is both therapy and art.

In looking at the research of both scenarios previously discussed, it is safe to say that integrated dance can be both therapy and art. For Gregg Mozgala, what started out as a choreographic process for a show, turned into therapy that wound up changing him for the better. When analyzing whether integrated dance is art or therapy it is important to look at both the process and the outcome. Depending on the situation, integrated dance can be both art and therapy at the same time. The therapy part is seen in the rehearsal process for a show in which the dancers involved in the company learn about their own bodies and the bodies of others, which creates a sense of community. This rehearsal process not only reveals a lot about the dancers and their movement abilities, but it also acts a method of coping with one's own difference. The end result of putting on a show is also both art and therapy. It is art because it is a public display of work that requires an audience. It is therapy because it is an enormous leap in terms of growth and development in a person's character and ability. Overall, putting on a work of art is a therapeutic process. However,

there are situations, such as those with the children and adults with Down's Syndrome, where integrated dance is used simply as therapy. This process is very intimate and exclusive. The work being done is purely for the development of the individual. The end result, although it may not be a show with an audience, does require a leap into the public as a new and improved individual. Therefore, as seen in these two very different situations, integrated dance has the ability to be both therapy and art.

SECOND POSING QUESTION:

Integrated Dance: How does the public take to this concept?

Although people with disabilities have made significant progress in today's society, there are still those in the general public who look down upon their differences. Because of these differences, many people have a tendency to discriminate against those with disabilities and therefore "establish standards of social normality" (Shapiro, 2008). As a result of these made up standards, people with disabilities are automatically limited in terms of what they supposedly can and cannot do. People in the public "see" that someone has a disability and therefore quickly jump to conclusions regarding that person's capabilities. This issue is clearly seen in the world of integrated dance. As audience members, the people of the public act as spectators to the performances done by the integrated dance companies. It is their job to "see" the performances and be entertained, and hopefully inspired, by the exceptional talent that is presenting itself on the stage. However, in most cases, the audience cannot get past the first step of "seeing".

When first being exposed to the disabled-bodied dancers on stage, the members of the audience only "see" the disability. They get caught up in the fact that those with disabled-bodies can even dance in the first place. Their curiosity takes hold and the support provided by the audience becomes more about sympathy than it does about appreciation for the work being performed. In a situation such as this, "there remains a certain rejection of dance groups that include dancers with disabilities, along with a questioning of the artistic merit of their works" (Shapiro, 2008). People of the public patronize the work being done by integrated dance companies, but do not realize how their reactions affect the dancers. Those who are putting themselves in the spotlight in a performance are not looking for sympathy. They want recognition as performers and artists, who have the capabilities to move and dance in ways unique to their bodies, just like able-bodied performers.

Accepting and understanding the work of integrated dance is especially difficult for those with no knowledge of dance and an ignorant view of disability. In such a case, a viewer of integrated dance might separate the able-bodied dancers from the disabled-bodied dancers and judge them based on physical appearance and ability in comparison to one another. In an essay by Ann Cooper Albright, a disabled dancer, she discusses the contrasting views that are created between the able-bodied body type and the disabled body. The able-bodied dancer is praised for his or her elegance, and beautiful, "classical body." The disabled dancer, with the "grotesque body," however, is commended on conquering

self-consciousness. He or she is seen as courageous for facing the limitations of his or her body and for being seen in such an exposed, public setting (Cooper Albright & Dills, 2001). Attitudes such as this reveal that the audience members have their own fears and hesitations regarding disabilities. Nevertheless, with increased exposure to performances by disabled dancers, audiences can overcome their fears and judgments and accept the performers for who they are as human beings. With an open, unbiased mind, the audience members can watch the performances to discover the beauty of the works instead of solely looking at the bodies of the dancers.

What is ironic, though, is that the grotesque body represents society in many more ways than the classical body. The classical body is, in a sense, a fantasy. It is an image widely displayed in society that is rarely ever achieved by the average human being. In a way, the classical body represents perfection. The grotesque body, on the other hand, epitomizes the numerous imperfections that all individuals, no matter abled or disabled, have in real life. In her essay, "Strategic Abilities: Negotiating the Disabled Body in Dance," Cooper Albright quotes literature and critical theory professor, Mary Russo:

The grotesque body is the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process, and change. The grotesque body is opposed to the classical body, which is monumental, static, closed and sleek, corresponding to the aspirations of bourgeois individualism; the grotesque body is connected to the rest of the world (Cooper Albright & Dills, 2001).

In a way, the performance of integrated dance on stage reveals "the disability of the able audiences to comprehend disability" (Tomkins, 1993). This shows that there is a lack of education on disability and a lack of support for those with disabilities who want to branch out and explore creative expression. Ultimately, audience members need to open their eyes and "see" past the physical differences present in the disabled-bodied dancers. They must understand that "seeing requires effort", and with this effort, audience members will be able to see the performance as a whole and appreciate it as an art form (Freire, 2003). Summed up in a quote by Alysoun Tomkins, an able-bodied Education Advisor for CandoCo, "perhaps if we concentrated on the abilities the individuals have rather than the physical disabilities they do not have, we would see the dance rather than the dancer" (Tomkins, 1993).

Overall, there needs to be more exposure to disability and a better understanding of it in order for there to be a greater appreciation for the work being done by integrated dance companies. Not only will this provide more opportunities to those with disabilities, but it will also "challenge the able-bodied population's traditional image of disabled people" (Tomkins, 1993).

SPREADING AWARENESS:

Spreading Education: Ways to create positive learning environments and prepare for disability in the classroom.

In order for those with disabilities to feel more accepted in society, it is important to promote positive learning environments in schools and dance studios. Teachers and classrooms alike should be prepared for anything and able to accommodate students of all abilities. When entering into a situation where children or adults with disabilities are present in the classroom, it is important for the teachers to act as role models for the rest of the students. Teachers should not separate the students with disabilities from the other students because it sends the wrong message to the class. The students without disabilities will see the differences in the other students and connect the differences with the separation created by the teacher. Once this connection is made, the able-bodied students will unintentionally make it their goal to maintain the separation. They will see that the teacher, who is the role model of the classroom, is purposefully doing this, so they will start to think that this is the way things are supposed to be.

Instead of creating this separation, it is important to combine the able-bodied and disabled-bodied students together. Bringing the students together not only creates a unified learning environment, but it also lets the disabled-bodied students know that they are students just like everybody else, even if they have a disability. Acceptance is key in the learning environment. If acceptance is established, there is more room for positive interaction between the students and the teacher. There is also more room for further growth and development in all of the students, whether it be physical or mental.

In classroom settings where some students have physical disabilities, it is important for the teacher and the other students to learn and understand the limitations of their disabilities. This will be accomplished through communication. It is possible that students will be in wheelchairs or use some sort of device for transportation. If this is the case, the teacher must "make every attempt to communicate at eye-level" (Elin, 2004). Creating this level of equality shows the student that he or she is just as important as the other students. It also establishes a mutual respect between the student with the disability and the teacher. This respect will ultimately aid in creating a positive learning environment. If the teacher makes an effort to listen to the students with disabilities and learn about what their individual bodies can and cannot do, then the teachers and even the students will realize that "those with physical differences are not fragile or sickly, just different" (Elin, 2004). Once the teacher is properly informed about the students with disabilities, he or she will be able to formulate lesson plans that accommodate all of the students in the classroom. In this process, the teacher must be sure to create a "safe, nurturing environment free of obstructions" that way when it comes time to dance, the students will be able to fully explore movement without the fear of judgement or the fear of getting hurt (Elin, 2004).

In the classroom setting, it is also important to set a pace for learning. It is quite possible that some students will have mental or cognitive disabilities, which causes them to intake information at a different rate. This means that the teacher should be prepared to

incorporate repetition, visual aids, physical demonstrations, and tactile methods in the lesson plans. Exercises should be able to be broken down and simplified so that those with the cognitive disabilities can understand the assignments and the tasks at hand. The use of these methods will not only help the students understand the exercises, but it will also help them with their own personal development (Elin, 2004).

All in all, if the teachers make a point to create appropriate relationships with their students, they will be able to provide a positive learning experience. The relationships that they form will not only create a mutual respect, but they will also act as examples for the other students in the classroom. Through this respect and positive learning environment, those with disabilities will not only thrive in the classroom, but they will also be prepared for the outside world and be more willing to put themselves out there.

CONCLUSION:

After analyzing the research and putting it all together, one can see that integrated dance holds a significant place in the dance world. Not only is it a performance art, but it is also a form of therapy. It can be used to gain more mobility in a person's walk, just like it can be used to gain awareness of a person's body in relation to space. Integrated dance has the power to promote unity and acceptance all while boosting the confidence of those who see themselves as being different. Because of the collaboration of the able-bodied and disabled dancers, integrated dance has begun to scratch the surface in eliminating body image prejudices. However, our society has a long way left to go. With the continuing spread of integrated dance education through companies like, AXIS Dance Company, The Gimp Project, CandoCo Dance Company, and Joint Forces Dance Company/DanceAbility, the societal view of dance and disability can continue to evolve. For now, people must learn to look beyond the physicality of other individuals, and focus on the story that a person is able to depict through the movement of his or her unique body. Ultimately, we all can learn a little bit more about each other if we take the extra time to dig below the surface and uncover the hidden treasures of individuality.

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Interview with Nicole Palminteri: Occupational Therapist

Background Information:

In an interview that I conducted with my older sister, Nicole Palminteri, I discovered that a lot of the research I came across matched with my sister's knowledge and experience in the field. In her early years, Nicole spent all of her time at school and dance, but after realizing that dance was not her passion, she quit and got involved in sports. Outside of school, Nicole spent her time volunteering for an organization called Camp Acorn that caters to children and adults with an array of physical and mental disabilities. In her many years of volunteering, Nicole developed a passion for working with people with disabilities. She had a special connection with everyone she worked with and was able to make a difference in their lives. As she got more involved in the organization, Nicole made the decision to turn her passion for this work into a career and went to school for occupational therapy. She graduated from James Madison University and continued on to graduate school at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, where she will graduate on May 18, 2012. This summer she plans to continue her education at various medical facilities across the country starting with UCLA, where she will complete field work at the medical facilities there. Although she is my sister, I went into the interview with an open mind, separating my personal ties so as to get more accurate, educational responses.

Interview:

At the start of the interview I asked Nicole if she could define disability. In her response she explained that disability cannot really be defined. It is different for every individual. Some disabilities are more severe than others and some are very simple. She summed it up by saying, "In general, disability is a limitation in a person's physical or mental capability (or both) that affects the way a person goes about everyday activities." I then proceeded to ask her to define dance. Because she grew up in the dance world, this question was easy for Nicole to answer. "That's simple," she said. "Dance is the expression of one's emotions through movement of the body." She continued on to say that this movement, like disability, is different for every person. She also added in that dance is often accompanied by music. With these two definitions in mind, I asked her if she had ever heard of integrated dance. She looked at me with a smirk on her face and said, "Of course I have. With my line of work and my experience in the dance world, I am always hearing about new advances regarding the disability culture." She told me that she had never actually seen a performance done by an integrated dance company, but that she was definitely interested in seeing a show in the future.

As we continued to talk, she revealed to me that she really supports the work being done by these companies. She supports the disabled-bodied dancers in their efforts to go

public. "Not that they have any reason to hide," she says, "but I still give them so much credit for putting themselves in the spotlight like that. Even as an able-bodied dancer, I know how scary it can be to be on stage. I can only image what it would be like to have a disability and be up there in front of an audience that can't get passed the fact that I am different." I agreed with her and said that the public can be a cruel place. She looked at me and said, "Carly, we grew up in such a bubble. Everyone knew everyone in our town and we all accepted each other, for the most part. We were lucky. People aren't as nice and understanding in other areas of the country." From living in Los Angeles for three years, I knew exactly what she was getting at. As we talked more and more about the audiences of these integrated dance performances, we came to the conclusion that the people of the general public are ignorant of the world outside of themselves. Nicole gave me her personal view and explained that society as a whole is way too concerned with image and status. "It's because of these standards that we create for ourselves that difference isn't accepted. It's really sad. The fact that someone can form an opinion about someone else solely based on the way that a person walks or looks boggles my mind. It amazes me that someone could be that shallow, but unfortunately these people exist." Because I did not want this interview to turn into something negative about how the public does not appreciate integrated dance, I decided to switch things up.

I asked Nicole, "What do you think about using dance as therapy for people with disabilities?" As I said this I could see her face light up. She said to me, "I think it is a great idea! I have used dance movement techniques numerous times with certain people that I work with, and I find that it is very effective. There is something about the use of movement as a means of expression that really helps people to get in touch with their own bodies." I was so excited when she said this because her philosophies on dance movement therapy matched the discoveries I had made in my research. Nicole continued on to say that movement helps with controlling impulses, as well as provides more understanding of the body in relation to space. I told her about the research I did regarding dance movement therapy for children and adults with Down's Syndrome, and every time I brought up a new point, Nicole would add in a detail or two that I missed. I guess I had forgotten just how knowledgeable she was in her field.

She then interrupted me and said, "You remember Andy Daily right? The boy with Down's Syndrome that I used to take care of? Well, when I used to work with him back in New Jersey, I would interact with him through movement exercises. He was very unaware of his body and his actions, so it was important for me to show him how he acted and give him examples of right and wrong. I would have him face me and mimic the motions I was doing with my body and the emotions I was creating with my face." I interrupted her and asked if that was similar to the concept of empathetic mirroring that I discovered in my research. "Exactly," she said. "This technique can be frustrating because it is hard for people with Down's Syndrome to concentrate and stay focused for a certain amount of time. They act on impulse and their moods are always changing. For Andy, he would cooperate for a few minutes, but the second that he messed up he would get angry at himself and retreat. But the more I worked with him, the better he got. He learned how to trust me and

got better at communicating. That was the ultimate goal, but it wasn't easy. Things like this just take time. You can't expect change or improvement to occur overnight."

Nicole paused for a second and took a breath. I could see a change in her energy. She was no longer excited and jumping at the chance to talk about her experiences, but she wasn't sad either. She had a smile on her face that looked to me as if she was proud of all that she had done. I waited a minute or two before asking why she was smiling and when I did she looked at me and sighed. "I am just happy. I have the best job in the world! I get to spend my days helping people, and seeing them grow and develop is the most rewarding experience. The people I work with are so special. They have such a different view of the world and so much more creativity in their thinking that most people don't know how to access. I think what I am trying to get at is that I am lucky." At this point, I knew that asking my sister to do this interview was the best decision I made for my thesis. Talking to someone who is so involved in the disability culture and so knowledgeable of this world really allowed me to value the work I did in my research process. Nicole made me realize that I still have a lot to learn, but if I am anything like her I have the potential to make a great impact in the world of dance and disability.

PERSONAL REFLECTION II:

How my research process affected/changed my views of dance and disability.

When first being faced with choosing a topic for my thesis, I had no idea what I wanted to do. I knew that I wanted to do something research based, but that was about it. My sister, Nicole, actually helped me to decide. She was the one that introduced me to the idea of dance and disability, which sparked my interest. When I was younger, I would accompany Nicole to the social dances for the organization, Camp Acorn, that she worked for. These social gatherings enabled the children and adults with disabilities to come together in a fun and upbeat environment with dancing, music, and games. As a volunteer it was my job to interact with the disabled-bodied individuals and help them to dance and enjoy their time at the gathering. Although not a formal example of integrated dance, the relationship that I formed with these individuals through movement imitated the basic concept of integrated dance. I did not know it at the time, but this experience stayed with me and played a major role in my decision to do a research thesis on integrated dance.

After moving to California, all of my time was spent going to school and dancing, so I did not have the opportunity to volunteer like I did in New Jersey. Therefore, my interest in working with children and adults with disabilities slowly disappeared. It wasn't until my sophomore year at Loyola Marymount that my interest was reignited. I saw a video in my Dance History class of a performer named, Homer Avila from Alonzo King's LINES Ballet. When he first came on the screen, I thought he was just another male ballet dancer. After looking more closely, I realized that he only had one leg. At first I was amazed at his ability to move with such power and grace across the floor, but as the performance went on, I completely forgot that he had a disability. In seeing this performance so soon after talking

to my sister, I knew immediately that I would do my thesis on the concept of dance and disability.

At the start of my research process, I was not exactly sure which direction I wanted to go in with my paper. In seeing Homer Avila's performance, I knew that I wanted to explore the performance aspect of dance and disability, but I also knew that that was not going to be enough. Once I started to do the research, I realized that this idea of integrated dance was used for more than just performing. Already knowing that dance could be used as a means of therapy for all different types of situations, I was curious to see if dance was used as therapy for those with disabilities. Sure enough, my research answered that question. I learned that dance movement therapy, or DMT is frequently used for people with all sorts of disabilities, both physical and mental. It not only helps these individuals to learn about their own bodies and the way that they work, but it also provides them with a sense of self-confidence. Even though dance movement therapy cannot cure disability, it does have the power to alleviate the difficulties that are presented. Knowing this, my interest in dance movement therapy and integrated dance increased.

Through this process, I was able to open my eyes to a new way of thinking about dance and the impact it has both on the audience and the dancers themselves. Because it is such a powerful art, dance enables the disabled-bodied dancer to be seen as something other than his or her disability. He or she is able to be transformed into an artist; a performer with something important to say. Although audience members sometimes have difficulty relating to these performers, I believe that with more exposure, integrated dance companies can help inspire more people with disabilities to step out of their comfort zones and not be afraid to be seen for who they are. All in all, my research experience has not only taught me a lot about integrated dance and its significance in the dance world, but it has also taught me a lot about who I am as a dancer and who I want to be as a person.

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Reflections of Dance Studies

Ballet IV (Professors: Tekla Kostek, Guida Palovska, Scott Heinzerling)

Each professor that I have had for ballet has focused on something different. In Tekla's class we focused heavily on precision, placement, and isolation of the muscles. Dancing with the music and ending when the music ended was very important. I learned from Tekla how to be specific with my movement and how to use the correct muscles to execute the steps. Prior to this class I found that I would overwork a lot of my muscles to try and accomplish a movement that could have been done with one muscle. This class definitely changed the way I work and train. Guida's class was quite the opposite. In her class we focused a lot on fluidity and transitions. class was more about the overall dancing of the steps versus the execution and perfection of the movements. This class was such a joy to be in and taught me how to actually like ballet. Scott's class is very different from the previous two that I took. The pace of the class is much slower, and really forces me to go back to the basics. most of our time is spent at the bar working heavily on alignment. We also focus a lot on rolling through the feet in order to prepare ourselves for jumps and turns. This class really helps me to evaluate where I am at as a dancer.

Jazz V (Professors: Paige Porter, Jason Myhre)

In Paige's class, a lot of our focus was put on repetition and set exercises. We had a memorized warm-up, as well as a few combinations that were done in every class. This style of teaching really helped me to work on my strength as a dancer. Knowing that the steps of the warm-up and the other exercises became second nature to me once I memorized them, I was able to focus on all of the little things that were happening in my body. This greatly improved my technique as well as my ability to pick up choreography. Jason's class was a bit different. There was no warm-up, so I had to learn how to properly prepare myself for class so that I would not hurt myself. Like in Paige's class, we did set exercises across the floor, which really helped me to work on my technique. What made this class different was that it was geared a lot towards performance. Jason taught me confidence and helped me to become a better performer, which will ultimately help me in the audition world.

Modern II, III, IV (Professors: Damon Rago-II, Lillian Barbeito-III, Holly Johnston-IV, Maria Gillespie)

This class was completely new to my body. Luckily, I had Damon as my first teacher, who really provided me with a great foundation of modern technique. In his class we focused a lot on rising and sinking, head-tail connection, and dancing as big as we can. We also got an introduction to inversions that would come in handy for my future modern classes. Lillian's class was a big change from Damon's. The pace was much slower, and we focused on various different modern techniques. In a sense, this class also focused on the performance aspect of modern and taught me how to be confident in movement that I didn't necessarily feel one hundred percent confident with. Holly's class was probably the hardest class I have taken here at LMU, but it was very beneficial. We focused heavily on the body. We discovered new muscles that we have never used before and we learned correct alignment. Overall this class made me a stronger dancer both physically and mentally. It gave me a boost of confidence that I really

embodied in my very last modern class with Maria. Maria's class was by far my most enjoyable modern class here at LMU. It pushed me to my limits and revealed a side of me that I did not even know I had. I gained a lot of confidence in this class, as well as a new love for modern dance that I will take with me after graduation.

Tap (Professor: Hiroshi)

This class was rather interesting. We did a mixture of tapping and learning tap history. We watched videos of old famous tappers and then tried to mimic those works. It was a lot of fun, but it was a very basic class. It was not a challenge for me at all, but it was a great way for me to get back into tap after not doing it for an entire year.

Hip Hop (Professor: Leslie Scott)

This class reminded me a lot of back home. Growing up as a hip hop dancer, this class enabled me to connect with who I used to be as a dancer. It also made me realize that I am meant to be a hip hop dancer. We focused a lot on stylized movement and performance. We worked on various genres of hip hop, which broadened my dance ability. We also focused on performance, which boosted my confidence and has prepared me for the competitive commercial world of dance.

Fundamentals of Dance Composition I and II (Professors: Judy Scalin, Damon Rago)

The main focus of this class was choreography. We learned how to approach choreography from different angles and prompts. Through text, art work, and music, we learned how to fully develop meaning in our work. Through our movement we could create and portray stories. We also learned how to work and choreograph in groups, which will ultimately benefit us in the real world. Dance vocabulary was also strongly emphasized and used. We learned how to properly speak and write about dance and how to critic dance without using words like "good" and "bad". The dance vocabulary ultimately expanded my knowledge of dance and has helped me to grow stronger as a performer. Lastly, the second part of this class focused on improvisation. Damon lead us through exercises that helped us become more confident in our movement choices. He also gave us various prompts that helped to guide our improvisations. Because of this class, I know longer freak out about improv, but instead embrace the challenge.

Laban Movement Analysis (Professor: Damon Rago)

This class was unlike anything I had every taken. It opened up my eyes to a whole other side of dance. I learned a lot about who I am as a dancer through Laban Notation. I discovered that I am constantly moving in Strong Weight and Bound Flow. My movement is typically Direct and Sudden with moments of Sustained movement. In addition to teaching me about my own movement style, this class helped me to work on improvisation. I still get nervous when I improv, but having this new knowledge from Laban has eased my nerves.

Styles and Forms (Professor: Chad Michael Hall)

This class also helped to work on choreography. However, the goal of this class was to force us dancers out of our comfort zones. Chad did his best to make us do movement that we

didn't feel comfortable with. This was very hard for me, but in the long run it really helped to broaden my dancing. Towards the end of the semester, this class got very personal and allowed me to open up about my past and dance out my frustrations from certain events that occurred. This class was a big challenge, but a great emotional release.

Dance History (Professor: Jill Nunes-Jensen)

The main focus of this class was of course the history of dance. Coming into the class with little knowledge of dance history, this class provided me with a lot of background information. We focused a lot on the origins of ballet and modern and how they evolved over time. We learned about the originators of styles and techniques and how their movements came about. Towards the end of the semester we learned about jazz, hip hop, and tap. Through this class I learned a lot about myself as a dancer as well as where my style of movement comes from.

Principles of Teaching (Professor: Teresa Heiland)

In this class, we learned a lot about what it means to teach dance and how to do it. The class focused a lot on creating proper lesson plans for different age groups. We learned how to incorporate dance vocabulary with technique, Laban movement analysis, and personal style. Although I do not plan on becoming a full time dance professor, this class has prepared me to enter into any teaching situation.

Kinesiology I and II (Professor: Mavis Rhode)

This class was very beneficial for me because it taught me a lot about the inner-workings of the body. I learned about the bones and muscles of all the major joints in the body, and learned about their origins, their insertions, and their functions. It taught me how to take care of my body and prevent against injury. In general, this class also provided me with an understanding of my alignment and the limitations that I have in my own body. It gave me information that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

To Dance is Human (Professor: Judy Scalin)

This class helped me to understand that movement is different for every person. I realized that what I consider to be dance, may be something completely different for someone else in another culture. Through this course, I gained a better understanding of the cultures around me, and I was able to feel more comfortable expressing myself through story telling. Overall, this class taught me a lot about who I am as a person and who I want to be in the future.

Philosophy of Art: Women in Film (Professor: Susan Barber)

This class was one of my favorite film classes at LMU. We looked at films with women as the main characters and saw how the time period changed their roles in society. This class allowed me to watch movies that I never would have watched in my life and has made me appreciate the cinema. It provided me with a new way to watch film and analyze the techniques used in the filming process.

Pilates (Professors: Teresa Heiland, Lizzy Mulkey)

Prior to coming to LMU, I had never done pilates work on the reformer. This one on one training really helped me to get connected with my body and discover muscles that I didn't even know I had. It also made me physically stronger as a dancer and helped me with my alignment. I do not have time in my schedule to do pilates this semester, but hopefully next semester things will change.

Music for Dance: The Vocal Experience (Professor: Barbara Dyer)

This class was so much fun and allowed me to get back into singing. Growing up I was always taking voice lessons and going to vocal classes, but when I got to college I didn't have time in my schedule to fit voice lessons in. This class helped me to further train my voice as well as train my breathing. It also helped me with performing. It was a great experience that gave me confidence in my voice again.

Dance of Africa (Professor: Monti Ellison)

I loved this class so much! Not only did I get exposed to African dance and the culture, but I got the chance to learn how to play African drums, which was such a cool experience! I got the chance to learn about a new culture through Monti's expansive knowledge and appreciate his talent. In addition to drumming and dancing, we also learned various African songs and sang them everyday! This was an awesome experience that allowed me to step out of my comfort zone.

Dance of Ireland (Professor: Maire Clerkin)

This class was definitely a new experience for me. It forced me to hold my body in a completely different way than I am used to in my other dance classes. I had to stay up on demi-pointe the entire time and keep my arms glued to my sides. Not only did I learn a lot about Irish dancing, but I learned a lot about the Irish dance culture. It is not a style I would choose to do again, but it was definitely a fun experience for one semester.

Dance and Disability:
A Look at Integrated Dance and its Impact on Society

Carly Palminteri

Sr. Thesis

Professor Heiland

October 11, 2011

When someone is faced with a physical disability does this mean that he/she is not able to be a dancer? Based on society's stereotypical image of a dancer, the general public would say no. In the eye of the public, someone with a disability would not be considered to have the right body type, the natural talent/ability, or the strength to be a dancer. However, should the physical make up of a person be the determining factor in what he/she may be capable of? Dance is more than just physical. For many people, dancing is a way of life. It is a way of speaking one's mind without words, and a way of using the body as a powerful means of communication. So to answer the above questions, a person, no matter his or her physical make up, is a dancer when he or she uses movement to demonstrate his or her own unique self.

Today, there are companies like, AXIS Dance Company, Joint Forces Dance Company/DanceAbility, The Gimp Project and CandoCo Dance Company that allow individuals to explore with their disabilities and forget about what it is that they cannot do. Instead, the focus is on the uniqueness of each individual, which allows movement to be created based on an individual's distinctive qualities. Because of these companies, those with various kinds of disabilities are not only provided with an outlet for expression, but are also given the opportunity to perform in public. This enables them to be seen by the world as dancers and human beings instead of as disabled bodies. Due to the fact that the dancers in these companies are both able-bodied and disabled dancers, a collaboration, along with a sense of community is formed between the two groups. This collision and synthesis of the two groups is known today as integrated dance. As a result of its growing popularity, the individual companies, through workshops and courses held throughout the world, have made large efforts to spread their expansive knowledge and education on integrated dance.

Originally founded by Thais Mazur in 1987, AXIS Dance Company was one of the first companies to combine both able-bodied and disabled dancers together in one work. After being well received by the public for its first ever performance in 1988, the company rapidly grew in popularity and began to perform in cities throughout the United States, as well as overseas in Europe and Siberia. Because the concept of joining together dancers with and without disabilities had never really been explored before, many doors were opened for those with the desire to move and create expression through their bodies. As a result of its fast growing popularity, AXIS Dance Company not only did performances, but began to teach classes and hold dance forums so that people of all ages and abilities could find their inner dancer. After a change in direction in 1997 with new co-directors Judith Smith and Nicole Richter, AXIS took its idea to a whole new level. More educational classes were taught and eventually an outreach program separate from the company was formed and called "Dance Access and Dance Access/KIDS!"¹

After attending a number of Dance Access classes, Wyatt Bessing, a writer and educator with spina bifida, explains his eye opening experience in a brief article called "Balance and Freedom: Dancing in from the Margins of Disability." In the few times that he attended the classes, Bessing discovered that Dance Access allowed him to overcome his self-consciousness and "create a fluid dialog" with the other able-bodied and disabled dancers around him.² Exploring with both individual movement and contact improvisation, Bessing was able to see a whole other side to himself and those around him.

In one instance of contact improv with co-director Nicole Richter, Bessing found himself in a moment of complete stability, which is something he is unable to obtain on a day-to-day basis. After this discovery through counterbalance, Bessing says, "An entire

world opened up in that tiny place of balance.”³ Because of the little moments like this, Bessing was able to see himself in a brand new light. He was able to break free from his metal braces that entrapped his legs, and ultimately discover how to move with his body naturally instead of fighting against it in an attempt to blend in with the rest of society. Overall, Bessing explains that “through dance, those with disabilities created more vivid, personal expressions of their lived experience than would words alone.”⁴

Understandably, those involved in AXIS Dance Company and the Dance Access classes were enthralled by this new collaboration of bodies, but what did the public have to say? According to a review by Allan Ulrich, a San Francisco Chronicle Dance Correspondent from the SFGate (part of the San Francisco Chronicle), “the quality of the dancing takes your breath away.”⁵ He says that the dancers contain a “fierce commitment” to all of their movements, and through the choreography and the dancers’ relationships with one another, a true community is formed on the stage.⁶ Bruce Weber, a writer for the New York Times explains that, “AXIS’s work instructs the viewer in how to appreciate it, and the lesson is delivered with cogent force: Sympathy is irrelevant. Forget what isn’t here, and pay attention to what is.”⁷ Ultimately, Weber proves the point that no matter the physical make up of a person, dancing can still be done in more ways than many believe to be possible. AXIS Dance Company explores these ways and in the long run produces captivating art that shows the world just what dance is about.

Around the same time as the founding of AXIS Dance Company and with word spreading fast about this new concept of integrated dance, a man by the name of Alito Alessi and his partner Karen Nelson, the original directors of Joint Forces Dance company, decided to hold their own workshop for everyone and anyone who had a desire and love for dance.

Their goal was to make dance accessible for all, and that is exactly what they did in their creation of the DanceAbility workshops. In a short article Alessi wrote called "Dance and Disability," he explains how dance to him is not based on physicality, but on attitude. He says that "All bodies have both ability and disability but neither defines people's potential for relating and building a sense of self-worth and community through dance."⁸ Like Dance Access, the DanceAbility workshops enable people from all walks of life to explore with their own bodies without the feeling of being judged. They can interact with those around them and create relationships through their movement. This not only builds a sense of community, but it allows those with disabilities to feel like they belong. The disabled dancers are able to embrace and love their bodies and share their uniqueness with the rest of the world. After partaking in one of Alessi's DanceAbility workshops, a participant said:

We people with handicaps are not used to people loving our bodies. Normally what you learn as handicapped people is that people are looking at what is missing, what doesn't work, and nobody is looking at what is here and what we can do. This work really supports a different view: I learned to look for what is here and work with that. You give people back love for their bodies, and do that by moving, by playing and developing more possibilities to move.⁹

Due to its growing popularity, what was the simple and local DanceAbility soon turned into DanceAbility International, or DAI for short. In 1997, after Alessi administered the very first DanceAbility Teacher Certification course, people all over the world began to spread the ideas of integrated dance. Through the teachings of the DanceAbility workshops, people began to change their "preconceived ideas about disabilities," and opened their eyes to a whole new world of education and performance.¹⁰ Today, DanceAbility International continues to inspire people in over nineteen different countries through its performances, educational workshops on integrated dance, and teacher training.

The Gimp Project, originally founded by Heidi Latsky in November of 2008, approaches dance and disability in a more courageous and “in your face” kind of way. The dancers in this company all have “unique limbs ranging from overly agile joints, absent limbs, foreshortened limbs, crooked limbs to exceptionally overdeveloped muscles.”¹¹ No matter their physicality, the dancers take their unique bodies and manipulate them in provocative and dynamic ways so as to challenge the audience’s view of dance, beauty, and body image. Overall, “the company tackles the issues of ‘integrated’ dance with a vengeance, touching on sexuality, intimacy and the vulnerability and anger associated with being constantly watched and judged.”¹²

In some cases, the dancers of Gimp will make verbal jokes on stage and mimic some of the preconceptions that audience members tend to have before seeing the show. Lawrence Carter-Long, a 42 year old man with cerebral palsy, does just this in a piece called “Two Men Walking” with able-bodied dancer, Jeffrey Freeze. At the start of the piece, Carter-Long is standing center stage and says to the audience, “Three cripples walk into a bar...” He then turns around to begin walking upstage.¹³ The joke is never finished. This is a powerful moment because it immediately forces the members of the audience to think about their own personal notions of dance and disability. Prior to performing “Two Men Walking,” Carter-Long “had never imagined himself as a dancer,” but Latsky, on the other hand, thought that his “gait” was extraordinary, and she therefore created the piece solely on the way he walked.¹⁴ Because Latsky pushed so hard and never gave up on her vision, Lawrence Carter-Long, along with the other dancers involved in Latsky’s company, were transformed from ordinary human beings with disabilities into beautiful, professional dancers. Theodore Bale, in his review of Heidi Latsky and her company in *Dance*

Magazine, sums up the work of The Gimp Project in one sentence by saying, "GIMP is without doubt a gleaming milestone in the progress of contemporary dance and theatre proving that the term 'disabled dancer' is an oxymoron."¹⁵

The final company to be discussed is CandoCo Dance Company. Founded in 1991 by Celeste Dandeker and Adam Benjamin, contrary to the other companies that came before it, CandoCo Dance Company was created as a result of the workshops that Dandeker and Benjamin held to spread the education of integrated dance. Although the other companies toured outside of the United States, CandoCo was the first integrated dance company to be formed in the United Kingdom. Surpassing DanceAbility International, CandoCo "toured over 50 countries visiting Europe, Australia, North and South America, Asia and Africa" in less than fifteen years.¹⁶ Just like the other companies mentioned, CandoCo has also made large efforts to spread the education of integrated dance throughout the United Kingdom. With their use of "extensive Learning and Development projects and activities," CandoCo presently shares their knowledge and understanding of integrated dance with over 12,000 people per year.¹⁷ Summed up in a brief quotation from *The Guardian*:

CandoCo reinvented the boundaries of dance by proving that virtuosity wasn't confined to the able bodied. They perform work of poignant grace and shocking physical bravado. They also stripped disability art of its last vestiges of political correctness.¹⁸

Although many positive outcomes have emerged from these collaborations of able-bodied and disabled dancers, it is important to address the fact that people today still only see those with disabilities as their disabilities. Instead of recognizing the talent, the authenticity, and the beauty of the dancer, people will watch a performance by a disabled dancer and react by saying how he or she seemed to overcome the obstacles of being

disabled. So much emphasis is put on the idea of being disabled, that people forget to acknowledge the disabled dancers as normal, professional performers. In instances such as this, a separation is created between the able-bodied and the disabled dancers, and therefore the audience begins to view the performance as a "spectacle." In an essay by Ann Cooper Albright, a disabled dancer, she discusses the contrasting views that are created between the able-bodied body type and the disabled body. The able-bodied dancer is praised for his or her elegance, and beautiful, "classical body." The disabled dancer, with the "grotesque body," however, is commended on conquering self-consciousness. He or she is seen as courageous for facing the limitations of his or her body and for being seen in such an exposed, public setting.¹⁹ Attitudes such as this reveal that the audience members have their own fears and hesitations regarding disabilities. Nevertheless, with increased exposure to performances by disabled dancers, audiences can overcome their fears and judgments and accept the performers for who they are as human beings. With an open, unbiased mind, the audience members can watch the performances to discover the beauty of the works instead of solely looking at the bodies of the dancers.

What is ironic, though, is that the grotesque body represents society in many more ways than the classical body. The classical body is in a sense a fantasy. It is an image widely displayed in society that is rarely ever achieved by the average human being. In a way, the classical body represents perfection. The grotesque body, on the other hand, epitomizes the numerous imperfections that all individuals, no matter abled or disabled, have in real life. In her essay, "Strategic Abilities: Negotiating the Disabled Body in Dance," Cooper Albright quotes literature and critical theory professor, Mary Russo:

The grotesque body is the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process, and change. The grotesque body is opposed to the classical body, which is monumental, static, closed and sleek, corresponding to the aspirations of bourgeois individualism; the grotesque body is connected to the rest of the world.²⁰

In spite of the fact that a majority of society represents the average, grotesque body type, our world still manages to produce images of idealism and perfection. Though disability has made a huge stride in terms of acceptance, those with disabilities still feel as if they must stay “hidden from view...in an attempt to live as ‘normal’ a life as possible.”²¹ Because of the collaboration of the able-bodied and disabled dancers, integrated dance has begun to scratch the surface in eliminating body image prejudices. However, our society has a long way left to go. With the continuing spread of integrated dance education through companies like, AXIS Dance Company, The Gimp Project, CandoCo Dance Company, and Joint Forces Dance Company/DanceAbility, the societal view of dance and disability can continue to evolve. For now, people must learn to look beyond the physicality of other individuals, and focus on the story that a person is able to depict through the movement of his or her unique self. In the end, we all can learn a little bit more about each other if we take the extra time to dig below the surface and uncover the hidden treasures of individuality.

Personal Aesthetic Statement:

What do I Find Beautiful and Transformative in Dance

Growing up as a competition dancer, my view of dance was very sheltered and specific. In my earlier years as a dancer, I was only exposed to a limited number of styles, and therefore did not experience a lot of diversity. My training was centered around ballet, tap, jazz, lyrical and hip hop. Because I grew up in this world, I spent more time rehearsing than I did training, which made a definite impact on my technique. As I got older and the dance world continued to evolve, I realized the importance of being a diverse dancer. As a result, I started making weekly trips into New York City to take different classes at Broadway Dance Center and Steps on Broadway. This is where I discovered contemporary. From my experiences in NY combined with my move to Los Angeles and the dance world out here, I can easily say that professional contemporary work represents my highest ideals regarding dance and the type of career I want to pursue.

An example of the contemporary work that I most strongly connect to is that of Justin Giles in his company Soul Escape. His movement style is unique and intricate, yet simple. He does not focus on incorporating "tricks" like multiple pirouettes, tilts, overall high extensions, etc. Instead he narrows in on the different articulations of the joints and the small, intricate movements that they can perform. He then combines these movements with traveling, free flowing movements that create contrast in the dance. Overall, his work really hones in on the idea of how dance is a form of expression. Because his dancers are all very different movers in their own ways, but have the capability to dance the same when asked, they all bring a certain dynamic to the company, which enhances their performances. They are all captivating and

inspiring, which is why I consider their work and this company to be the representation of my personal aesthetic.

Music also plays a major role in my aesthetic. One of the things that I love about dance is the ability to use movement to bring out specific accents in music. This can be done in many different ways using various different parts of the body. For example, if there is a loud crash in the music, you could do a big jump or a fall to the ground or even a throw of the arms. The possibilities are truly endless. If there is a soft ding, you could do a change in your focus, or even a small contraction of the ribs. Depending on the intensity of the music, movement quality can always change, which creates dynamic within the work. A song with words is always very powerful, as long as the movement matches the meaning of the song. For me, music has the ability to inspire movement, which is why I love seeing works done with music. However, I do believe that movement can be just as strong, or even, stronger without any music at all; it all depends on the situation and the message of the work.

When thinking about dance and the ideal dancer, I do not have a set image in mind. I do not feel that it is necessary to mold yourself into a specific body type just to meet the standards created by society. However, I do feel that there are limits. For example, I think it is possible to be too skinny to the point where it is not pleasing to look at on stage, as well as the opposite. For ballet I understand that petite and thin is the ultimate goal, which is especially beneficial for partnering work. This body type is appealing to me when I am watching a ballet performance because it meshes well with the dainty and graceful movements performed. But this same body type would not be pleasing to me in other styles like hip hop, jazz, and tap. In general I think it is important for dancers to have bodies unique to themselves. We should all be in shape and fit

in regards to our own bodies. I know personally that I will never be the stick thin ballerina type. I will always be a taller girl with wider hips and a bigger chest, but that does not mean that I cannot be a dancer. Overall, I feel that outer appearance of the body comes second to what the body is capable of doing in terms of movement. For me, the most important aspect of dance is the ability to express through movement. If a person is an amazing mover then I do not concentrate on his or her physical appearance. What matters to me is the passion that radiates through movement when someone truly loves what he or she does.

Aside from body types in dance, I find that I also love watching dancers who do things that I cannot. For instance, I do not have great leg extensions, so I love watching dancers who do. Those that can lift their leg to their head and hold there make me so jealous, yet I cannot help but watch in awe. In watching others do the things my body will not let me do, I get inspired to work even harder to better myself. There comes a point, however, when watching these types of "trick" steps gets old and overdone. If all a dancer can do is kick her leg really high, then she is not a true dancer, at least in my opinion. There is a lot more to dance than just the tricks, which is why I am so glad to be out of the competition world.

All in all, my aesthetic in dance is all about movement quality. I am a fan of intricate movements that are slight and sometimes very hard to notice if one is not watching carefully. I love to see passion and dynamic in movement, and try to incorporate these things in my own movement as much as possible. For the most part, contemporary work represents my ideal aesthetic, but I do love watching other styles like jazz, tap, and hip hop that incorporate more of a playfulness in the movements.

Moving to a City: Spain Job and Housing

Total Nannies: Founded in 2002

Work as an Au-Pair or Nanny in Spain

- Description
 - We operate a cultural exchange program placing candidates with professional families in Spain. The program offers candidates the possibility to learn about a different culture and language whilst living directly with a family in a variety of locations all over Spain. In exchange for accommodation which will be a private bedroom or apartment and a weekly income the candidate would be required to look after the family's child or children and help out in the family. The program offers only professional families with quality accommodation and both family and candidate must keep to the program guidelines which are designed to keep both parties happy. The program is free to all candidates and benefits include a weekly wage, holiday pay, all expenses paid, post placement support throughout the program, a return flight to the UK, a completion certificate and company backing throughout the whole stay. Families often travel to the mountains in the winter and to the sea in the summer and you would travel with them. Some families travel worldwide. This program offers a unique opportunity to travel and save and make new friends whilst learning about a different country and language and this often results in a strong bond between the host family and the candidate that matures into a special long lasting friendship.
- Highlights
 - The highlights of this program include consist of the opportunity to travel to Spain in the comfort and safety of a carefully screened host family. If you really want to get to know the in depth culture of Spain whilst learning the language and making friends then this is the program for you. All our host families are very professional (doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants, business owners etc) and have a very high standard of living. They live in lovely homes, employ other staff and travel extensively. Experience life in Barcelona, Madrid and many other cities.
- Qualifications
 - Experience is not necessary. We also have very high profile positions for Qualified Teachers or candidates with a child care diploma.
- Minimum Education

- High School
- Job Types
 - Education
 - English as a Second Language
 - Family and Home Studies
 - Au Pair
- Languages
 - English
- Salary/Pay=From GBP 90.00 to GBP 500.00 per week
- Experience Required
- no
- This Program is open to
- American, European, Canadian, Australian, South African, Kiwi and Worldwide Participants.
- Participants Travel
- Independently
- Typically Participants Work
- Independently
- Total Nannies's Mission Statement
- We operate a cultural exchange program placing female candidates with professional families worldwide. The program offers candidates the possibility to learn about a different culture and language while living directly with a family from the country of their choice. In exchange for accommodation which would be their own private room or apartment and a weekly salary the candidate would be required to look after the family's child or children and help out in the home. The program offers only professional families and quality accommodation and both family and candidate must keep to the program guidelines which are designed to keep both parties happy. The program is free to all candidates and offers a weekly wage, holiday pay and all expenses paid and placement coordinator support throughout the program.

Information on local dance studios and dance events occurring can be found on this website:

<http://www.barcelona-dance.com/info-EN.php>

Perspective Essay Reference Sheet

¹ AXIS Dance Company, "About AXIS." Last modified November, 2010. Accessed October 9, 2011. <http://www.axisdance.org/about.php>.

² Naomi Jackson (Editor), *Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice*, (Lanham, MA: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2008), 286-87, 332.

³ Ibid., 287

⁴ Ibid., 286

⁵ Ulrich, Allan. "Review: AXIS Dance Company at Malonga Casquelord." *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 9, 2009, E-1.

⁶ Ibid., E-1

⁷ Weber, Bruce. "A Dance Company Mixes Arms, Legs and Wheels." *New York Times* 1 November 2009: A37B.

⁸ Jackson, *Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justices*, 332

⁹ Ibid, 332

¹⁰ DanceAbility International, "History." Last modified 2010. Accessed October 11, 2011. <http://www.danceability.com/history.php>.

¹¹ Latsky, Heidi. A Heidi Latsky Dance Production, "The GIMP Project." Last modified 10/1/11. Accessed October 8, 2011. <http://www.thegimpproject.com/gimp/>.

¹² Ibid

¹³ Carter-Long, Lawrence, & Freeze, Jeffery, "From the Limb-Two Men Walking," *The GIMP Project*, performed by Jeffery Freeze and Lawrence Carter Long, original music: Sxip Shirey, venue: Woodstock Playhouse; July 2007, Web, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goWe6WLvDek&feature=related>.

¹⁴ "Dance troupe triumphs with unique bodies." TODAY. Associated Press, 17 May 2009. Web. 6 Oct 2011. <<http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/30797280/ns/today-entertainment/>>.

¹⁵ Bale, Theodore. "Heidi Latsky." *Dance Magazine*, May 2009. <http://dancemagazine.com/reviews/May-2009/Heidi-Latsky> (accessed October 9, 2011).

¹⁶ CandoCo Dance Company, "CandoCo Dance Company: Background." Last modified 2011. Accessed October 9, 2011. <http://www.candoco.co.uk/about-us/background/>.

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ann Dills, and Ann Cooper Albright, *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 58-59.

²⁰ Ibid, 59

²¹ Ibid, 58

DANCE PERSPECTIVES ESSAY - RUBRIC for Draft & Final Paper

Prof. Judith Scalin and Teresa Heiland

revised 9/5/11

STUDENT: Carly Palminteri

Dance Program, Loyola Marymount University

Fulfillment of the Assignment and Creative Approaches to Topic	Absent	Below Ade	Adequate	Good	Excellent
Author creatively brings together ideas from texts and source materials from dance, core, and elective classes.					5
Essay is written in a scholarly voice and successfully reveals the writer's point of view.					
Author cites an appropriate number of sources in-text for this length essay and properly constructs a variety of ways to cite sources in the text.					
Essay presents the topic in a fresh, clever, explorative and/or inquisitive way.					
Personal significance of the topic is evident by the voice used (without using I/we).					

Crafting and Shaping of Ideas and Guiding Reader					
Paragraph one and the beginning of the essay capture the reader's attention and guide the reader to want to read more.					5
Thesis is easily identifiable, insightful, sophisticated and crystal clear. Connects well with paper title.					
Author uses an appropriate number of details to clearly make a statement, unfold a purpose and support the thesis of the paper.					
Author uses primary & supplementary source information to strengthen each point.					
Paragraphs are well structured so they have a focus and topic sentence.					
Pacing of the essay is well crafted, organized, and keeps the reader engaged and eager to continue reading.					
The essay is organized, revealing an idea that is complete, connected and explored in-depth.					
Excellent transitions guide reader from point to point and paragraph to paragraph.					
Author describes authors, dances, places, times, dates, books, and ideas, representing them with appropriate detail, accuracy, and sufficient information so that the reader understands the source and concept.					
The body of the paper is organized so that the concepts evolve into a clear conclusion. The conclusion pulls together the main ideas, and topics and primary text(s) are employed in the paper in a meaningful way.					

Mechanics					
Sentence structure, syntax, conventions of grammar, punctuation, and diction are excellent.					5
Essay is spell-checked and contains minimal to no spelling or punctuation errors.					
Essay includes correct use of Chicago Manual of Style citation style.					
Citation list is sufficient: it includes at least 2 primary text sources (3 is better) and cites original book/journal sources for knowledge gained in courses you've taken..					
Essay conforms in every way to format requirements (1" margins, 7-10 pp, dbl space, etc).					

Deadlines Met: 8/2 pp.	First meeting with Teresa: _____ First Draft Due Date met: _____ First Draft Meeting (if necessary): _____ Final Draft Due Date met: _____	Grade, if you were to receive a grade today: <u>A</u>
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Dance and Disability:
A Look at Integrated Dance and its Impact on Society

Carly Palminteri

Sr. Thesis

Professor Heiland

October 11, 2011

When someone is faced with a physical disability does this mean that he/she is not able to be a dancer? Based on society's stereotypical image of a dancer, the general public would say no. In the eye of the public, someone with a disability would not be considered to have the right body type, the natural talent/ability, or the strength to be a dancer. However, should the physical make up of a person be the determining factor in what he/she may be capable of? Dance is more than just physical. For many people, dancing is a way of life. It is a way of speaking one's mind without words, and a way of using the body as a powerful means of communication. So to answer the ^{SE} above questions, a person, no matter ^{his or her} his/her physical make up, is a dancer when ^{he or she} he/she uses movement to demonstrate ^{his or her} his/her own unique self.

Today, there are companies like, AXIS Dance Company, Joint Forces Dance Company/DanceAbility, The Gimp Project and CandoCo Dance Company that allow individuals to explore with their disabilities and forget about what it is that they cannot do. Instead, the focus is on the uniqueness of each individual, which allows movement to be created based on an individual's distinctive qualities. Because of these companies, those with various kinds of disabilities are not only provided with an outlet for expression, but are also given the opportunity to perform in public. This enables them to be seen by the world as dancers and human beings instead of as disabled bodies. Due to the fact that the dancers in these companies are both able-bodied and disabled dancers, a collaboration, along with a sense of community is formed between the two groups. This collision and synthesis of the two groups is known today as ^{-ade?} integrated dance. As a result of its growing popularity, the individual companies, through workshops and courses held throughout the world, have made large efforts to spread their expansive knowledge and education on integrated dance.

Originally founded by Thais Mazur in 1987, AXIS Dance Company was one of the first companies to combine both able-bodied and disabled dancers together in one work. After being well received by the public for its first ever performance in 1988, the company rapidly grew in popularity and began to perform in cities throughout the United States, as well as overseas in Europe and Siberia. Because the concept of joining together dancers with and without disabilities had never really been explored before, many doors were opened for those with the desire to move and create expression through their bodies. As a result of its fast growing popularity, AXIS Dance Company not only did performances, but began to teach classes and hold dance forums so that people of all ages and abilities could find their inner dancer. After a change in direction in 1997 with new co-directors Judith Smith and Nicole Richter, AXIS took its idea to a whole new level. More educational classes were taught and eventually an outreach program separate from the company was formed and called "Dance Access and Dance Access/KIDS!"¹.

After attending a number of Dance Access classes, Wyatt Bessing, a writer and educator with spina bifida, explains his eye opening experience in a brief article called "Balance and Freedom: Dancing in from the Margins of Disability". In the few times that he attended the classes, Bessing discovered that Dance Access allowed him to overcome his self-consciousness and "create a fluid dialog" with the other able-bodied and disabled dancers around him². Exploring with both individual movement and contact improvisation, Bessing was able to see a whole other side to himself and those around him.

¹ "About AXIS." AXIS Dance Company. AXIS Dance Company, November 2010. Web. 11 Apr 2011. <<http://www.axisdance.org/about.php>>.

² Naomi Jackson (Editor), *Dance, Human Rights, and Social Justice*, (Lanham, MA: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2008), 286-87, 332.

In one instance of contact improv with co-director Nicole Richter, Bessing found himself in a moment of complete stability, which is something he is unable to obtain on a day-to-day basis. After this discovery through counterbalance, Bessing says, "An entire world opened up in that tiny place of balance"³. Because of the little moments like this, Bessing was able to see himself in a brand new light. He was able to break free from his metal braces that entrapped his legs, and ultimately discover how to move with his body naturally instead of fighting against it in an attempt to blend in with the rest of society. Overall, Bessing explains that "through dance, those with disabilities created more vivid, personal expressions of their lived experience than would words alone"⁴.

Understandably, those involved in AXIS Dance Company and the Dance Access classes were enthralled by this new collaboration of bodies, but what did the public have to say? According to a review by Allan Ulrich, a San Francisco Chronicle Dance Correspondent from the SFGate (part of the San Francisco Chronicle), "the quality of the dancing takes your breath away"⁵. He says that the dancers contain a "fierce commitment" to all of their movements, and through the choreography and the dancers' relationships with one another, a true community is formed on the stage⁶. Bruce Weber, a writer for the New York Times explains that, "AXIS's work instructs the viewer in how to appreciate it, and the lesson is delivered with cogent force: Sympathy is irrelevant. Forget what isn't here, and pay attention to what is"⁷. Ultimately, Weber proves the point that no matter the

³ Jackson, 287

⁴ Jackson, 286

⁵ Ulrich, Allan. "Review: AXIS Dance Company at Malonga Casquelord." *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 9, 2009, E-1.

⁶ Ulrich, E-1

⁷ Weber, Bruce. "A Dance Company Mixes Arms, Legs and Wheels." *New York Times* 1 November 2009: A37B. Print.

physical make up of a person, dancing can still be done in more ways than many believe to be possible. AXIS Dance Company explores these ways and in the long run produces captivating art that shows the world just what dance is about.

Around the same time as the founding of AXIS Dance Company and with word spreading fast about this new concept of integrated dance, a man by the name of Alito Alessi and his partner Karen Nelson, the original directors of Joint Forces Dance company, decided to hold their own workshop for everyone and anyone who had a desire and love for dance. Their goal was to make dance accessible for all, and that is exactly what they did in their creation of the DanceAbility workshops. In a short article Alessi wrote called "Dance and Disability", he explains how dance to him is not based on physicality, but on attitude. He says that "All bodies have both ability and disability but neither defines people's potential for relating and building a sense of self-worth and community through dance"⁸. Like Dance Access, the DanceAbility workshops enable people from all walks of life to explore with their own bodies without the feeling of being judged. They can interact with those around them and create relationships through their movement. This not only builds a sense of community, but it allows those with disabilities to feel like they belong. The disabled dancers are able to embrace and love their bodies and share their uniqueness with the rest of the world. After partaking in one of Alessi's DanceAbility workshops, a participant ^{said} says:

We people with handicaps are not used to people loving our bodies. Normally what you learn as handicapped people is that people are looking at what is missing, what doesn't work, and nobody is looking at what is here and what we can do. This work really supports a different view: I learned to look for what is here and work with that.

⁸ Jackson, 332

You give people back love for their bodies, and do that by moving, by playing and developing more possibilities to move⁹.

Due to its growing popularity, what was the simple and local DanceAbility soon turned into DanceAbility International, or DAI for short. After Alessi in 1997, administered the very first DanceAbility Teacher Certification course, people all over the world began to spread the ideas of integrated dance. Through the teachings of the DanceAbility workshops, people began to change their "preconceived ideas about disabilities", and opened their eyes to a whole new world of education and performance¹⁰. Today, DanceAbility International continues to inspire people in over nineteen different countries through its performances, educational workshops on integrated dance, and teacher training.

The Gimp Project, originally founded by Heidi Latsky in November of 2008, approaches dance and disability in a more courageous and in your face kind of way. The dancers in this company all have "unique limbs ranging from overly agile joints, absent limbs, foreshortened limbs, crooked limbs to exceptionally overdeveloped muscles"¹¹. No matter their physicality, the dancers take their unique bodies and manipulate them in provocative and dynamic ways so as to challenge the audience's view of dance, beauty, and body image. Overall, "the company tackles the issues of 'integrated' dance with a vengeance, touching on sexuality, intimacy and the vulnerability and anger associated with being constantly watched and judged"¹².

⁹ Jackson, 332

¹⁰ "History." DanceAbility International. DanceAbility International, 2010. Web. 12 Apr 2011. <<http://www.danceability.com/history.php>>.

¹¹ Latsky, Heidi. A Heidi Latsky Dance Production, "The GIMP Project." Last modified 10/1/11. Accessed October 8, 2011.

<http://www.thegimpproject.com/gimp/>.

¹² Latsky 10/1/11

Wow!

In some cases, the dancers of Gimp will make verbal jokes on stage and mimic some of the preconceptions that audience members tend to have before seeing the show.

Lawrence Carter-Long, a 42-year-old man with cerebral palsy, does just this in a piece called "Two Men Walking" with able-bodied dancer, Jeffrey Freeze. At the start of the piece, Carter-Long is standing center stage and says to the audience, "Three cripples walk into a bar...". He then turns around to begin walking upstage¹³. The joke is never finished. This is a powerful moment because it immediately forces the members of the audience to think about their own personal notions of dance and disability. Prior to performing "Two Men Walking", Carter-Long "had never imagined himself as a dancer", but Latsky, on the other hand, thought that his "gait" was extraordinary, and she therefore created the piece solely on the way he walked¹⁴. Because Latsky pushed so hard and never gave up on her vision, Lawrence Carter-Long, along with the other dancers involved in Latsky's company, were transformed from ordinary human beings with disabilities into beautiful, professional dancers. Theodore Bale, in his review of Heidi Latsky and her company in *Dance Magazine*, sums up the work of The Gimp Project in one sentence by saying, "GIMP is without doubt a gleaming milestone in the progress of contemporary dance and theatre proving that the term 'disabled dancer' is an oxymoron"¹⁵.

¹³ Carter-Long, Lawrence, & Freeze, Jeffery, "From the Limb-Two Men Walking," *The GIMP Project*, performed by Jeffery Freeze and Lawrence Carter Long, original music: Sxip Shirey, venue: Woodstock Playhouse; July 2007, Web, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goWe6WLvDek&feature=related>.

¹⁴ "Dance troupe triumphs with unique bodies." TODAY. Associated Press, 17 May 2009. Web. 6 Oct 2011. <<http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/30797280/ns/today-entertainment/>>.

¹⁵ Bale, Theodore. "Heidi Latsky." *Dance Magazine*, May 2009. <http://dancemagazine.com/reviews/May-2009/Heidi-Latsky> (accessed October 9, 2011).

The final company to be discussed is CandoCo Dance Company. Founded in 1991 by Celeste Dandeker and Adam Benjamin, contrary to the other companies that came before it, CandoCo Dance Company was created as a result of the workshops that Dandeker and Benjamin held to spread the education of integrated dance. Although the other companies toured outside of the United States, CandoCo was the first integrated dance company to be formed in the United Kingdom. Surpassing DanceAbility International, CandoCo "toured over 50 countries visiting Europe, Australia, North and South America, Asia and Africa" in less than fifteen years¹⁶. Just like the other companies mentioned, CandoCo has also made large efforts to spread the education of integrated dance throughout the United Kingdom. With their use of "extensive Learning and Development projects and activities", CandoCo presently shares their knowledge and understanding of integrated dance with over 12,000 people per year¹⁷. Summed up in a brief quotation from the Guardian:

CandoCo reinvented the boundaries of dance by proving that virtuosity wasn't confined to the able bodied. They perform work of poignant grace and shocking physical bravado. They also stripped disability art of its last vestiges of political correctness¹⁸

(B) Although I have discussed many of the positives that have come out of the collaboration of able-bodied and disabled dancers, it is important to address the fact that people today still only see those with disabilities as their disabilities. Instead of recognizing the talent, the authenticity, and the beauty of the dancer, people will watch a performance ~~done~~ by a disabled dancer and react by saying how he/she seemed to overcome the obstacles of being disabled. So much emphasis is put on the idea of being disabled, that people forget

¹⁶ CandoCo Dance Company, "CandoCo Dance Company: Background." Last modified 2011. Accessed October 9, 2011. <http://www.candoco.co.uk/about-us/background/>.

¹⁷ "CandoCo Dance Company: Background", 2011

¹⁸ "CandoCo Dance Company: Background", 2011

to acknowledge the disabled dancers as normal, professional performers. In instances such as this, a separation is created between the able-bodied and the disabled dancers. In an essay by Ann Cooper Albright, a disabled dancer, she discusses the contrasting views that are created between the able-bodied body type and the disabled body. The able-bodied dancer is praised for his/her elegance, and beautiful, "classical body". The disabled dancer, with the "grotesque body", however, is commended on conquering self-consciousness. He/she is seen as courageous for facing the limitations of his/her body and for being seen in such an exposed, public setting ¹⁹. This... (5)

What is ironic, though, is that the grotesque body represents society in many more ways than the classical body. The classical body is in a sense a fantasy. It is an image widely displayed in society that is rarely ever achieved by the average human being. In a way, the classical body represents perfection. The grotesque body, on the other hand, epitomizes the numerous imperfections that all individuals, no matter abled or disabled, have in real life. In her essay, "Strategic Abilities: Negotiating the Disabled Body in Dance", Cooper Albright quotes literature and critical theory professor, Mary Russo:

The grotesque body is the open, protruding, extended, and secreting body, the body of becoming, process, and change. The grotesque body is opposed to the classical body, which is monumental, static, closed and sleek, corresponding to the aspirations of bourgeois individualism; the grotesque body is connected to the rest of the world ²⁰.

In spite of the fact that a majority of society represents the average, grotesque body type, our world still manages to produce images of idealism and perfection. Though disability has made a huge stride in terms of acceptance, those with disabilities still feel as

¹⁹ Ann Dils (Editor), and Ann Cooper Albright (Editor), *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 58-59.

²⁰ Dils (Editor), 2001

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if they must stay "hidden from view...in an attempt to live as 'normal' a life as possible" (58). Because of the collaboration of the able-bodied and disabled dancers, integrated dance has begun to scratch the surface in eliminating body image prejudices. However, our society has a long way left to go. With the continuing spread of integrated dance education through companies like, AXIS Dance Company, The Gimp Project, CandoCo Dance Company, and Joint Forces Dance Company/DanceAbility, the societal view of dance and disability can continue to evolve. For now, people must learn to look beyond the physicality of other individuals, and focus on the story that a person is able to depict through the movement of his/her unique self. In the end, we all can learn a little bit more about each other if we take the extra time to dig below the surface and uncover the hidden treasures of individuality.

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