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Layers Revealed

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Loyola Marymount University

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Senior Thesis: Project
Title of Project: *Layers Revealed*

Callie N. Lyons

Mentors:
Chad Michael Hall
Teresa Heiland
Judith Scalin

Senior Thesis: Project
Title of Project: *Layers Revealed*

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Layers Revealed

A Documentary Featuring L.A. Contemporary Dance Company

By: Callie N. Lyons

Mentors:

Chad Michael Hall

Teresa Heiland

Judith Scalin

Layers Revealed: A Documentary Featuring L.A. Contemporary Dance Company is a video thesis. The intention behind this film is set out to reveal the behind the scenes reality of concert dance, the intricacies that formulate the end product, and what it takes for a dancer to stay present in their craft. I am simply intrigued by the creative process of creating movement and believe everyone should be able to experience that reality.

My objective is to inform audiences, of all backgrounds, whether you are a dancer or a non-dancer, the small details that are involved in the creative process. It is rare that people, other than the dancers and choreographer, get to be in such an intimate environment. When I watch dance performances, I envision the rehearsal and all of the collaborative efforts that factor into what makes a dance what it is on stage. This is how *Layers Revealed* evolved and only hope that those who have viewed and will view this film can find a deeper appreciation for the soul, love, energy, and commitment necessary to build a dance show from scratch.

Loyola Marymount University
Senior Thesis Perspective Essay

So You Think You Can Educate?

By:

Callie Lyons

December 2, 2010

Judith Scalin
Teresa Heiland

Callie Lyons
Senior Thesis
December 2, 2010

So You Think You Can Educate?

The name Lauren Froderman may ring a bell, but for most, an even lesser significant sound resonates, the chirping of crickets. For the likes of deeply educated dance connoisseurs and movement seekers, names such as Merce Cunningham, Vaslav Nijinsky, Lester Horton, Paul Taylor, and Martha Graham strike the gong. These dance pioneers are five of the many roots that uphold this art medium. In our generation soiled in overly dramatized reality programming, better off known as preposterous interpretation of truth, the way in which dance is being exploited is frightening because it diminishes the educational credibility and competency that dance educators have invested incalculable time building. Spectacle shows like *So You Think You Can Dance* paint dance as a glittered, ingenuous portrayal of artistic authenticity. Lauren Froderman, to link her back to the premise of these statements, is the season 7 winner of *So You Think You Can Dance* and contributes much to the meat of this issue.

On November 15, 2010, there was an article about Froderman printed in the *Loyolan*, Loyola Marymount University's biweekly newsletter. The article was titled "This Lion Can Dance" which highlighted Froderman. She was interviewed about her future entrance into the school, for the Spring 2011 term, as a freshman. This cheerleader turned dancer will not be a dance major due to personal choices. Emily Rome, the interviewer, asked Froderman if she would study dance at all, and Lauren responded by saying, "I just didn't want to overkill with dance or get tired of it. I love dancing, I really enjoy it and I was going to see if I could try to take some classes, but I didn't really want to major in it." Rome responded by saying, "You'd

also probably be way ahead of everybody if you majored in dance!” Froderman retorted with a very brief, yet to the point, answer, “[laughs] No, no.” (Loyolan, Page 7)) This interview presents many puzzling dilemmas. Rome is a clear example of how misguided our current culture is about dance. What type of education are people receiving from this type of show? Yes, the audience is recognizing the technical and competitive side of dance, but what they fail to experience is aesthetic appreciation of artistic work. The interviewer clearly lacks education about the depths and intelligence, craftsmanship, and passion it takes to study dance in an academic setting and to perform dance as an art. This show is not at all the realest and rawest interpretation of dance because if this was so, students like Rome would be more articulate about what a degree in dance offers.

Dance has scholarly significance that is lacking in reality dance shows. Dance artists have fought endlessly to establish a presence in an environment of subtle bias against this art form and *So You Think You Can Dance* does nothing but belittle the advancements advocates are pursuing. What many fail to recognize or understand is that there is comprehension and rationality, historical reference and problem solving involved in making and performing dance. Art is not a fabrication of really cool or hip ideas to get people to think a dancer is innovative nor is it about who can create the most memorable and most technically challenging dance. To create a work of art, there must be an application of intellect, expression, communication, literacy, and integrity. Julia Cameron, a journalist, teacher, author, poet, and artist states, “The need to be a great artist makes it hard to be an artist. The need to produce a great work of art makes it hard to produce any art at all” (Cameron 1992, 2002). Dancing and dance making are not forceful processes and

require deep analytical process and structuring. *So You Think You Can Dance* forces choreographers to produce pieces within days, leaving them to resort to superficial presentations of dance, which then educates the viewer with false visuals and shallow ideals of what quality dance is.

In order to halt the plaguing of bad art in our society, completely ridding the show would not be the overarching solution. Ideally it would help dilute the stigma of dance being a competitive sport rather than an art, but pushing for dance education in schools would help people understand its value. It is invaluable for children to study dance as an art so that they are able to realize that dance is a form of the human experience. Philosopher Francis Sparshott simply correlates dance to life by stating, "Dance is a form of life- one of those domains, real but vaguely delimited, around which human affairs cluster. A dance could be equated with a performance or activity that pertained to that domain in a way that could be recognized, though we would not expect to be able to specify it in words" (Sparshott, 1995). Dance education is necessary in the school system or shows like *So You Think You Can Dance* will continue to misinform people of its true depth. It is highly beneficial to receive an education in dance because it can shape a person's complete being. Instead of experiencing life solely in the superficial layer of existence, a dance education can help expand one's horizons. It's time to take charge and inform people that dance is not about the tricks and acrobatics, but it's the processes and aesthetic awareness that help evolve a work of art and this can be achieved by giving children an education in dance.

In addition to offering an aesthetic education, dance awakens the mind by encouraging the brain to map and imitate things in an organized fashion. When the mind sees things in motion, it instantaneously signals a patterning sensation and begins to make connections from what is seen to what is known and learned from past experiences. There is an emotional, physical, and mental absorption that occurs and is then practiced and performed repeatedly to train the mind to store information without it becoming lost. Educator Eric Jensen connects learning to the brain-based approach by stating,

“Brain-based education is best understood in three words: engagement, strategies, and principles. Brain-based education is the engagement of strategies based on principles derived from an understanding of the brain... Brain-based education is learning in accordance with the way the brain is naturally designed to learn. It is a multidisciplinary approach that is built on this fundamental question: What is good for the brain?... By using what we know about the brain, we can make better decisions and reach more learners, more often, with fewer misses. Quite simply, it is learning with the brain in mind. Brain-based education considers how the brain learns best. The brain does not learn on demand by a school’s rigid, inflexible schedule. It has its own rhythms. If you want to maximize learning, you first need to discover how nature’s engine runs.” (Jensen, 2008).

Gluing our eyes to the television set while voting for the best dancer does not allow for such activity but activates a very narrow and flat evaluation of dance. There is no active engagement occurring from the bewitchment of reality dance programming. If society took those two hours

out of the day, that would be spent watching reality dance shows and dedicated that time to promoting dance education, there would be a clearer vision of how dance benefits children. Movement with intent, purpose, and integrity are feasible and thought-provoking teaching mechanisms whereas *So You Think You Can Dance* educates the viewer on how to see dance as being in resemblance to a sport, which in turn makes the dancing appear ostensibly generic. This show is a very unrealistic take on dance as an art and trains the viewer to understand superficiality, which nearly obliterates the sole purpose of educating people about dance as an artistic form of expression.

Due to the decline of dance education in our schools, dance is the most misunderstood art form because people have a hard time relating to its language and approaches to representation and meaning. People associate high kicking legs or twenty pirouettes with good dancing and simplistic and visually challenging works as bad or weird dancing. Reality dance shows relate to what most people would call good dancing, emphasizing the hyper-mobility of extension and high energy movements. Producers do not speak the language of dance, but they do understand the nature of competition and link competition with what people tend to call good dancing. A high kicking battement does not necessarily speak the way a slow moving, intentionally crafted shape would speak, and, sadly, TV audiences generally do not seek out experiences that require them to question because that's considered just far too much inquiry for any normal being to handle. Ironically enough, the disconnect evolves from the lack of information about dance and not from the overwhelming task of thinking about dance in an intelligent or sensory manner. If people were to understand that the language of dance is just a expression of the world in the form

of movement, then people would be more likely to make sense and appreciate its simplicity. Sparshott connects language to dance by saying, "Dance and speech are parallel: each of them is the developed and articulated version of an originally inchoate form of activity" (Sparshott, 1995). The image, pulse, vibration, breath, contact, and the beauty of movement is a way to create conversation without the necessity of speech. When speaking to one another, tempo, speed, range, tone and volume fluctuate depending on the nature of the conversation. The same occurs with dancing. *So You Think You Can Dance* feels the need to extinguish high energy dances when the most calm and simple dances are the most powerful. This show does not expose the most accurate depiction of reality and that is the purpose of dance, to present various realities in the form of nonverbal speech. Dance is a reverberation of what is truly manifesting in the world around us but this reality dance show does not allow for truth to enter because of fear. There is fear that ratings will drop or money will be lost and for that reason they do not take artistic or educational risk. Having dancers perform a cultural dance is not being risky, it's being politically correct. Having dancers move their right hand slowly for thirty seconds is being risky. If our school systems allowed for learning in dance academics, shows like *So You Think You Can Dance* would likely be willing to expand their scope of entertainment because people would be able to understand and relate to different approaches to dance. They would have that sense of understanding of movement aside from perfect pirouettes. Movement is language without words. Brehm and McNett state, "Movement may communicate where words fail" (Brehm & McNett, 2007). If people were able to receive information about how connected dance is to language and to the world, the entire concept of *So You Think You Can Dance* could be altered for the better of

the viewer and the field of dance.

Education is becoming less interactive and more sedentary. Imagine what this combination is doing to our youth. America is a television crazed culture. Watching television does not require contact or communication with much of anything, but the luminous screen, creating an uncanny disconnect between body and mind. Yes, comprehensive reading, writing, and communication skills are stressed more than ever in the American school systems but there is not enough emphasis for movement activities. Sue Stinson, dance professor for the University of North Carolina Greensboro, explains the vitality of dance by stating, "Reading, like dancing, can offer adventure and challenge, wisdom, connection, transcendence, and many other experiences that help us live a meaningful human life. Those are the real reasons to learn to read, and the reasons to study dance" (Stinson, 2005). A deeper linkage could be made if students were not solely connecting the possibility of reading and writing in a stationary setting. Teachers should encourage embodied learning. Movement is a benefactor in the practicability of reading, writing, and understanding language. In investigating this phenomenon, Brehm and McNett state an accurate response to the vitality of movement in correlation to literacy, "Creative dance studies engage linguistic intelligence. Some of the many creative dance activities that address literacy skills include expressing the meaning of vocabulary words and words that exemplify phonetic rules, working with the quality of phonetic sounds and the beat of a word's syllables, and interpreting the meaning of story characters, plot, setting, and mood" (Brehm & McNett, 2007). Movement is story and imagination and to successfully understand reading and writing, one must be able to visualize a scenario. The downside to TV, in general, is that people are not

able use their imagination. An image is already given and ideas are already crafted. *So You Think You Can Dance* gives no room for creative interpretation. It's kind of a task to try to build a creative tale about a dance that is only based on the idea of *battements* and jumps. A dance that has a hand moving for thirty seconds asks the viewer to interpret. If students were engaged in classroom activities exploring movement, there would be no need for students to resort to reality television for education in the field of dance.

The pitfall of this reality show, *So You Think You Can Dance*, is the breakdown of esteem and humiliation one faces from judgments by a panel of judges who are said to be experts in dance, which is questionable in itself. As dancers are criticized on bias opinions, viewers begins to learn that dance is associated with harsh criticism. Of course dance is full of criticism, but feedback is usually constructive, meaningful, and given from someone who is quite savvy in the art of dance analysis, criticism, and evaluation. Most individuals do not recognize that dance is deeper than tricks and it's very dispiriting to know that our world is being educated in such a manner. Reality dance shows are driving our art form into the gutter. People like Rome look at people who study dance as lesser than those who can curtsy a win on *So You Think You Can Dance*. When it all comes to down to it, the show is based on popularity and who is the most crowd pleasing. There's nothing artistic about *So You Think You Can Dance* and to label it as such is appalling. As flattering as it is that there is a show dedicated to dance, a lot of work needs to be done to shape it as an artistic avenue for educating rather than a money making scheme for top level management and executives who probably have about as much understanding of dance as as an art as does a caveman.

So You Think You Can Dance has branded itself throughout the country and has millions of fans and supporters. It's truly a challenge for those who are seeking to preserve what the founding pioneers of dance established when shows like this dumbed-down its essence. It's already bad enough that people see it at the low end of the barrel, in comparison to other arts, like music, and reality programming does not help this problem. There are a million Emily Romes in the world who think dancers, like Lauren Froderman, have an upper hand over educated dancers. These individuals lack an understanding of dance as an art and as an educational tool. Ask any dance major in this world how many negative comments they've receive from peers about their choice of studying dance and a tome compiling all of those conversations could be made. People who think in this fashion entirely depreciate the educated dancer, which in turn decreases his or her merit. *So You Think You Can Dance* is taking away the opportunity for people who are most influenced, the youth, to experience a deep rooted education in dance. Green Gilbert categorizes the arts by stating, "An enriched environment with plenty of movement, multi-arts experiences, appropriate challenges, timely and positive feedback, and a focus on process rather than product, will continue the growth of a fully functioning human both in body and mind" (Gilbert, 2006). Studying dance is significant for all humans because it breeds a profound understanding and also respect for its origins. What a dance and creative dance education provides, and what *So You Think You Can Dance* fails to accomplish, is a strong inherit sense of prolific appreciation, knowledge, and understanding of an, authentic, bona fide presentation of dance, the most unregarded art of all. *So You Think You Can Dance* is crippling

the credibility of dance and the way to combat this force is to offer dance education so that those who become educated can educate others.

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Callie Lyons

Reflection: Summary of Dance Studies

Due: September 24, 2010

Fundamentals of Dance Composition I

- An introduction to dance terminology
 - Examples: proprioception, kinesphere, motif, breath (inhale/exhale)
- Awakening our senses to playful movement
 - Example: vocal exercises (shouting, whispering, laughing) while incorporating movement
- Active exercises to open ourselves to other classmates
 - Partnered and group activities
- Sculpture Studies
 - Gathered a selection of books and chose several sculptures to imitate
 - Choreographed dance phrases that incorporated those various images
 - This grew into a large movement phrase that was viewed by the class
 - Constructive criticism and positive feedback was received
- Duet Studies
 - Partnered dance study (Alix Beamon)
 - Fused phrases from the sculpture studies with new movement vocabulary to produce a visually rich movement study
 - Constructive criticism and positive feedback was received
- Learning outcomes/Overall reflection of course
 - This course allowed me to express myself fully without fear and anxiety of being judged or criticized
 - This course enabled me to expand my dance vocabulary/language
 - This course encouraged me to work artfully and with great intention
 - This course helped me speak and write like a dance artist
 - This course pushed me to work at my highest potential and introduced me to the resources, fundamentals and foundations needed to grow as a dancer

Fundamentals of Dance Composition II (Exempt)

Laban Movement Analysis

- Explored how to interpret movement through dance notation
- Drew on various exercises to understand the four main categories
 - Body, effort, shape, and space
- Body
 - Sequencing, patterning, and connecting the body
- Effort
 - Space
 - Indirect/Direct
 - Weight
 - Strong/Light

- Time
 - Sudden/Sustained
- Flow
 - Bound/Free
- Shape
 - Shape Forms
 - Ex: Wall, ball, pin
 - Modes of Shape Change
 - Shape Flow
 - Carving
 - Directional
 - Ex: Spoke/Arc
 - Shape Qualities
 - Rising
 - Sinking
 - Spreading
 - Enclosing
 - Advancing
 - Retreating
- Space
 - Kinesphere
 - Spacial intention
- The class exercises were interactive
- We reviewed different dance videos and discussed the movement based on Laban Movement Analysis
- Learning Outcomes/Overall reflection of course
 - This course helped my dancing by:
 - Allowing me to understand different ways to create volume in my body
 - Allowing me to comprehend body connectivity more clearly
 - Allowing me to scribe dance/movement onto paper

Dance Styles and Form

- This course introduced me to the principles of structuring/crafting/creating/exploring choreography
- This course introduced me to the principles of incorporating music and text into choreography
- Chance procedure
 - Using games and other various ways to choreograph movement based on chance
- Class projects/exercises
 - Trio choreography study (Cheryl Smith and Kelly Stanley) (incorporating music)
 - Choreographed using chance procedure
 - Used the Twister board and made each color/section a specific movement
 - Each of us spun the wheel several times and crafted a movement phrase
 - We then assembled all of the phrases and created a dance

-
- Next, we picked three songs to use for our study and narrowed it down to one song by picking a random CD
- Our movement dynamics, quality, and rhythm was then formed based off of the music we chose
- Solo choreography study (incorporating music)
 - Choreographed using chance and intuition
 - Chad stressed the idea of motifs in this particular study
 - I used intentional, repetitive movement to structure my movement
 - Chad and David gave each of us a CD full of music and I picked the music based off of an emotional connection
 - After we each presented our study Chad and David then paired us with another student and we did our studies together—Not planned but spontaneously
- Solo text study
 - This was the most challenging study because we had to incorporate text
 - I chose to use text from a poem I created
 - I chose not to record my text but rather speak it live while performing my movement
 - I felt this would help me break out of my shell of feeling anxious about speaking and dancing, simultaneously, in front of the class
- Learning outcomes/Overall reflection of course
 - What I gained from this course was confidence in choreography and performing with text
 - Chad and David helped us express our creativity through various exercises and tools, such as chance, that enabled our creativity to come at ease

Dance History

- This course opened my eyes to the world of dance
- I was able to understand the foundations of many dance styles and genres
- This course made me aware of how dance started
- I learned about many dance artist/choreographers/directors that I had never knew prior to entering the course
 - I was able to understand how influential they were/are to the dance community
- We studied the major players in the world of ballet such as:
 - Nijinsky, Folkine, Balanchine, Massine
 - Along with ballet companies:
 - ABT, Royal Ballet, NYC Ballet
- We studied the major players in the world of modern dance such as:
 - Graham, Horton, Limon, Ailey, Humphrey, Duncan,
 - Along with modern companies:
 - Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, Merce Cunningham Dance, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company
- We studied the major players in the world of jazz dance such as:
 - Fosse, Robbins, Dunham

- We studied the major players in the world of Broadway dance such as:
 - Fosse, Robbins
 - Along with Broadway Shows
 - West Side Story, A Chorus Line
- We studied the major players in tap dance such as:
 - Savion Glover, Bill Bojangles, Gregory Hines
- We studied the major players in hip-hop dance
 - Electric Boogaloos, Afrika Bambaataa
 - Locking, popping, breaking
- This course allowed me to receive a full range of knowledge on the art of dance and all of its forms, styles, and genres
 - I feel very empowered that I was able to walk away from this course with a plethora of knowledge about my craft

To Dance is Human: Dance, Culture, and Society

- In this course, we were presented with such a variety of information regarding various ethnic groups, cultures, and social traditions and how they interpret dance
- We had a slew of guest speakers come including:
 - Marjoni Forte, Lula Washington, and other very intelligent people
- We engaged in thoughtful conversation regarding various cultural practices
- Our homework assignments were structured around the intent of the course which was to open ourselves to other cultures
- We ended the course with a very powerful project
 - Basket Studies
 - In this assignment we had to decorate a basket about all of the things that represent who we are
 - We used these baskets during our Native American sing/chant for a few weeks
- Story Telling
 - In this activity, we each told very personal stories that have shaped who we are as human beings
 - I was able to see various sides of people that I had never previously seen
 - This was a great way for our class to find something beautiful in each other outside of the dance-classroom environment

Kinesiology I

- In this course we learned how to perceive the body as a form of architecture regarding the structure of the skeleton and the muscles which move it
- We discussed the different elements and function of cells
 - Cell relationships
 - Specific functions of each cell
- We learned about the components of the skeletal system including cartilage, bone , and bone maintenance

- We investigated about the function and anatomy of the circulatory system, cardiovascular system, and the heart
- We also learned about the nervous system including the relationship between the central and peripheral nervous system
- We learned about the influence of stress, nutrition, environment and lifestyle on the cells of the body, and on the body as whole

Kinesiology II

- In the secondary portion of kinesiology, we developed further understanding of kinesiological ideas and anatomical fact which we could relate to dance based theory
- We learned to identify specific bones and muscle groups within the body such as the pelvis, hip, knee, patellofemoral joints, ankle, foot, and both lower and upper extremities
- We learned about major regions and functions of the body with particular attention to the spine and pelvis
- We gained a greater understanding of the different types of joints within the body and how they function and move
- We learned about the importance of taking care of our own bodies with the idea of longevity for our dance careers in mind
- Considering longevity, we created a personal conditioning program in which to practice in conjunction with our dance practice to keep our bodies strengthened and flexible
- We cultivated a knowledge of common dance injuries and how to prevent them through correct alignment and awareness of the body's placement

Philosophy of Arts: Course Replacement → Entertainment Marketing

- This course was very intriguing because I was able to get an understanding of how the world of television, movies, and music operate
- Television programming
 - In this portion of the course we analyzed how to read ratings
 - We critically viewed several locations and noticed how active people were in watching certain programs
 - Ex: We read ratings for the city of Baltimore and noticed that a lot of people watch morning programs (like Good Morning America) and then you notice the decline in viewers around early afternoon. This is because many people are at work and are not watching TV. Later in the day, more viewers start to pour in (Ex: Oprah ratings are extremely high). And of course, a lot of people are watching Primetime televisions
 - We also noticed how networks organize shows
 - Ex: There is a technique called tent-poling, which means that a network will put not so popular shows before and after a really popular shows. They do this because they know people will tune in a little bit early for the popular show forcing them to watch the show before it. They also do this because they believe people will keep that channel on after the popular show is over, forcing them to watch the show after

- Nielsen Stimulation
 - This is a tool used to measure ratings for specific regions and to see what gender, age, certain demographics are tuning into specific programs
- Movies
 - During this section of the class, we reviewed all of the movies that were out in theatres and that were coming to theatres
 - We talking about how movies are rated (Motion Picture Association of America)→ which is complicated and very bias
 - We discussed how movies are marketed
 - We thoroughly reviewed production companies and networks and their affiliation with one another
 - We talked about how long movies stay in theatres and how many theatres they can be
 - We discussed why movies are profitable and how they can be unprofitable
 - Project
 - Pick a movie: “Eat Pray Love”
 - Create a marketing plan to market the movie
 - Hollywood Stock Exchange
 - Website where you can buy and sell stocks for movies
 - This was a fun assignment in which we had to analyze movies and buy stock
 - Sometimes you would lose money depending on if the stock went down
- Music Industry
 - The music industry is a dying industry
 - With the advancement in internet and illegal downloading, the record label industry is struggling and are not as profitable as they were in the past
 - Project
 - Pick a band/musician: “The Roots”
 - Create a marketing plan to market this band
- Learning outcomes/Overall reflection of course
 - This class opened my eyes to the very complicated world of the entertainment industry
 - I really learned the ins and outs of the business and how things are advertised
 - I have a better understanding of how things are funded in the movie, television, and music industry
 - I also have a clear vision of how technology/Internet is drastically affecting these three industries

Media/Tech

- In this course, David and Chad really helped us how to integrate technology with dance
- This was a great way to use our creative skills in another way other than dancing
- Music
 - We learned how to cut music
 - We learned how to create music using Garageband

- Video
 - We learned how to shoot dance footage using various angles and other techniques to produce a quality dance project
 - We learned how to edit film using iMovie HD
- Final Project
 - In my final project I created a dance reel
 - This has been very useful for auditions and whenever someone needs to see footage of me dancing
- This course allowed me to take full advantage of the technical aspect of dance and to create my own dance scores and dance films

Principles of Teaching
(Pending)

Drumming
(Pending)

Ballet

- Throughout my studies in ballet at Loyola Marymount University, I have discovered that it has truly shaped my technical abilities as a modern/contemporary dancer
- I've always known that ballet is the fundamental of most dance forms, not all, but I never took full advantage of how powerful it can be
- I have learned a lot from Tekla over these past years
 - She has taught me to accept who I am as a dancer
 - She has taught me to let go of the emotional and physical strain and baggage that life can burden us with and just be
- The biggest learning experience I have taken from this course is to be present
 - Stay focused
 - Apply yourself and really stay engaged
 - Take all corrections and use that to become a better dancer

Modern

- In my modern experience here at Loyola Marymount University, I have learned many new things to enhance my capabilities as a dance artist
- I have learned how to move in and out of the floor with precision and grace
- I have enhanced my skill in inversions
- I have learned how to exert my energy in a proficient and efficient manner
- I have learned the principles of head-tail connection
- I have fully engaged the concept of dynamics and musicality
 - This is very important and will enhance the quality of my movement
- My modern dance experience has been the most beautiful experience for me thus far
 - It has allowed me to be more risky
 - It has broken so many bad "competition" dancer habits
 - It has allowed me to investigate another side of contemporary dance unlike things you see on So You Think You Can Dance

- I am truly grateful for this experience

Modern Workshop with Karen

- I could honestly write a novel for all of the wonderful things this class/Karen McDonald has offered me over the year
- We engaged in a lot conversation and discussion
 - By consistently talking about dance, I was able to communicate my thoughts more clearly
- 4 Main Concepts:
 - Core
 - Floor
 - Breath
 - Music
- We worked a lot on improvisation and making things our own while maintaining an advanced and technical skill to our dancing
- We learned to just let go and dance
- We incorporated “story” into every aspect of the class
 - We learned how to make a simple plie exercise a story to enliven our dancing
 - We made all of our improvisation exercises into a story
- Karen awakened an energetic quality in my dancing that had never seen light until I was given the opportunity to work with her on such an intimate level

Jazz

- This course allowed me to understand the different genres of jazz dance
- I was able to learn how to manipulate my movement to make it look refined, polished, and sharp
- I was able to enhance my jazz dance proficiency throughout my training in this style of movement
- I was able to get a better understanding of the ins and outs of the commercial dance world

African with Monti

- This course awakened me to the different song and dances from the continent of Africa (more specifically West Africa)
- We played drums, we sang traditional songs, and performed very high energy African dances
- Along with learning dance and song, we were able to get a lot of inspiration and wisdom from Monti
- This course was very exciting because I had never taken an African dance course before entering this class

Yoga with Holly

- Yoga with Holly was painful, peaceful, invigorating, tiring, and amazing all rolled into one
- We went through a series of sun salutations (A and B)
- We actively engaged in meditative activities

- We partnered with one another and conducted various partnering stretches
- We worked on inversions, hand stands, head stands, and other intense upside down poses

Pilates

- Pilates with Lizzy has been extremely transformational
- I have learned many important mechanics that will help me function as a dancer
- I have learned how to actively engage my center/core
- I have built deep internal strength
- This course has allowed me to fully investigate, understand, and correct things in my body
- Since Lizzy is a dancer, it helped me connect to her with much ease

Callie Lyons

Senior Thesis Project

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A Self-Reflection On My Movement Aesthetic

As an evolving dance artist, I have come to appreciate and praise the small, detailed nuances that make dance, and, more importantly, the concept of life so beautiful. It is not the glitter and gold, the glamour and sparkles that shine light to aesthetically pleasing images but those things that are raw, simple, complex, and humanly authentic. The effortless quality of dance is what I attract to and find most relatable. I enjoy exuding a quality of dance that is connected deeply to my spirit and as closely permeable to my interpretation of reality. I find myself challenging my artistry by constantly seeking that place of vulnerability, that area where we tend not to graze out of fear of void, in order to grow a completely genuine dance vocabulary and language.

My training as a studio dancer shaped my artistic eye to see and create dance in a linear, one-dimensional structure. Although grateful for the technical proficiency and knowledge I gained, my studio training lacked one vital necessity, substance. I didn't fully connect my soul to my dancing because I thought of dance merely on the surface and not of meaning. Because I was not aware of dancing from my heart center, my movement powered out of my limbs and my core body reacted passively. This is the overarching dilemma with my studio dance training. My

dance teachers relied heavily on staying trendy and, what I like to call, “contemporary hip”. This style of dancing, that I was trained to perform, initiated out of a protruding neck line that created a spinal imbalance, flailing of limbs without any direct focus of what is occurring in the core, and no particular attention to how much energy should be exerted to small dynamic movements and large dynamic movements, seeing that there is a vast variance. I also learned how to be competitive in a superficial layer instead of competitive in a sense of hunger and drive out of passion. What studio dancing needs more of is an investment in dance education so that dancers are able to compare and contrast those historical figures with their movement patterning. As a dance major, I am able to understand the anatomy of the human body and its relationship to movement. I am able to dance from the deepest part of my being and free myself from the typicality and normality of competitive dance. I now understand dance pedagogy and how it relates, translates, and affects my dance aesthetic.. All of these aspects have altered the way I dance so that my movement is now mature instead of trendy. Dance is a four-dimensional art form in which I must dance from the entirety of my spirit instead of solely from the externality of my skin.

Since continuing a more intuitive dance education at Loyola Marymount University, I have come to establish a movement vocabulary full of circularity, twisting, and spiraling. I find bliss in being able to explore the full range of my kinesphere and how I can manipulate each and every part of my body, seeing that they have equal significance and importance. I have found a deep rooted appreciation for the simplicity of dance and the complexity that exist in abstract movement. I also sense my movement vocabulary embodies the Limon technique of release and

recovery, codified by modern dancer Jose Limon ,where there is an exploration of weight in regards to gravity. This technique incorporates breath, weight, suspension, and release. I pull tools from this method yet also infuse the ideologies from other modern greats like Martha Graham and Bella Lewitzky. I think finding the link between my personal aesthetic and to other historical modern dancers is something I consider of grave importance. It's like the equivalent of knowing your ancestral lineage because those people, previous to your existence, mold your being and the future of the art.

I find much of my inspiration deriving from other artist. Sidra Bell is a fresh, new artist that completely encapsulates my full presence. Her work is daring, haunting, animated, and aesthetically riveting. The way in which she weaves her movements in and out of negative space, with extreme, dynamic qualities in rotation and circularity, presents the physical prowess of her dancers. She layers her choreography with quirky and off the wall gestures that expose emotionality and the exponential capacity of human possibility. That is what I am attempting to seek in my movement vocabulary. I strive to seek the infinite. I say infinite in that it will influence me to keep searching for more information because there is always new knowledge to obtain.

As an artist, I live for the process of creation. The end product, or the performance phase, is the result of a metamorphosis within the human condition. The evolution of a dance is like the birth of a child. During pregnancy, the mother must nurture the fetus with nutrients to birth a healthy child. Dance works in the same nature, a choreographer devotes time and energy to give life to a work of art and, to do this, he or she must feed it the ingredients necessary to craft a

masterpiece. As an audience, I like to envision the creative process. Whether I know or don't know the process itself, I enjoy creating this image of the dancers and choreographer in the studio or any space where there is collaborative and interactive communication. I imagine the clothing they would be wearing, the time of the day, and even the air quality. The creative process is so special to me in that there are no rules just open play. Dance is an open field of potentiality. As a dancer and an audience of dance, the process and creative ideas are where I mold much of my appreciation and respect for dancers, choreographers, and any individual involved in making a production possible.

As I continue to expand the boundaries of my dance language and adeptness, I only hope to gain more of a receptiveness to the beauty that is dance. There is much to be learned and much to be taught. I can only imagine the things I have yet to learn about my art. I also have an immense duty to uphold and preserve the roots of dance. By passing on the knowledge I have absorbed through studying the historical, anatomical, and aesthetic dimensions of dance, I must take ownership in flourishing these ideologies so that we can continue to develop this art form tremendously.