

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Research Enhancement Program Grant
Final Report for award period beginning January, 2004
The Alexander Technique Applied to the Erick Hawkins
Approach to Modern Dance
Principle Investigator: Michelle Nance
Department of Theatre & Dance

ABSTRACT

The aim of my proposal was to conduct scholarly research on the compatibility of the Alexander Technique and the Erick Hawkins approach to modern dance. My research was gathered from interviews with two experts (Nada Diachenko of Boulder, Colorado and Cynthia Reynolds of New York, New York) both known for combining the Hawkins approach with the Alexander Technique in university-level dance classes, as well as with private clients. Additionally, I gathered research from other published scholarly material on both approaches, as well as my own experiences through observing and participating in workshops, lessons, and classes throughout the project period.

The research gathered allowed me to start the foundation for an article entitled, *“Heads From Tails: A Study of the Alexander Technique Applied to the Erick Hawkins Approach to Modern Dance”*; which is scheduled to be submitted to SOMATICS Magazine; a journal that publishes features of interest to both laypersons and professionals in the mind/body fields.

In addition to writing the article, I was also invited to formally present my research at three conferences and workshops in New York, NY, Edmond, OK, and San Marcos, TX from October 2004 – March 2005. (See *“List of Presentations”* below). Further, I have deepened my working relationship with Nada Diachenko, and have been invited to present my research, teach, and perform with her as part of an exchange program between *Centro Cultural* in San Jose, Costa Rica and the University of Colorado-Boulder in September of 2006.

Moreover, my research has deeply affected the quality and scope of my teaching by keeping me abreast of the latest developments in the fields of dance and somatics. I currently teach modern dance courses in the Erick Hawkins Dance Technique. Because of my findings, I have deepened my understanding of the Hawkins technique and have learned how to apply information from the Alexander work into the training of college-level modern dancers.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS (Pending)

“Heads From Tails: A Study of the Alexander Technique Applied to the Erick Hawkins Approach to Modern Dance” by Michelle Nance, MFA; 15 pages.

Pending publication by SOMATICS Magazine-Journal of the Mind/Body Arts and Sciences.

LIST OF PRESENTATIONS

1) *Guest Residency by Nada Diachenko (Hawkins and Alexander Specialist)*

October 1-8, 2004. San Marcos, TX

This residency provided me a forum in which to present research gathered during interviews and observations in Boulder, CO with Nada Diachenko, professor at the University of Colorado. I received funding from *Opening Door Dance Theatre* and *Orchesis Dance Company* (both departmental organizations) to bring Ms. Diachenko to San Marcos in Oct. 2004. She and I conducted group and private lessons and presentations in both the Erick Hawkins Technique and the Alexander Technique for Texas State faculty and students. Ms. Diachenko and I also presented a co-produced piece of choreography, which highlights the physical manifestations of the two methods while in performance.

2) *“Alexander and Hawkins Work in the University Setting”*

January 5, 2005. New York, NY

A panel discussion facilitated by myself as part of the Erick Hawkins Winter Intensive Conference.

3) *“Questioning the Body/Embodying the Question”*

March 11, 2005. Edmond, OK. .

Part of the American College Dance Festival held at the University of Central Oklahoma. A panel discussion facilitated by Ray Schwartz of the University of Texas at Austin. As a panel member, I had the opportunity to present my findings and participate in a question/answer session.

LIST OF PENDING AND CURRENT SUPPORT

Travel grant received through the University of Colorado-Boulder for:

“Centro Cultural Emerging Artist Program” - San Jose, Costa Rica

* Exchange program sponsored by Centro Cultural and the University of Colorado-Boulder. Residency scheduled for: September, 2006.

I have been invited to present collaborative choreography with Alexander/Hawkins specialist, Nada Diachenko. Additionally, we will conduct classes, workshops, and lecture demonstrations in both the Hawkins and Alexander techniques.