

THE EPHEMERAL CONTRACTION: A UNIVERSITY BASED INTERNATIONAL  
STUDY INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY DANCER-AUDIENCE  
SYMBIOSIS

HONORS THESIS

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## **ABSTRACT**

Is dance dead? Some authors, critics, and members of the public might believe that dance in the 21st century is dying or dead, but this isn't true. In dance, a deep connection between the dancer and the audience member remains eternal. It would be impossible for dance to die while dancers and audience members endure. In 1983, Judith Lynna Hanna's research book, *The Performer-Audience Connection*, helped initiate serious studies about dancers and audiences, but acknowledged research on this connection is sparse. The dancer-audience symbiosis does, however, change with the issues that occur every year, so it's important to keep the public aware of the disconnections and connections proposed by dance research and innovation. Specifically for this thesis, the international exchange of dance majors proved to be extremely important. Dance can find a valuable resource of constant and current innovation within university dance programs/divisions. I believe that dance must accept the latest technologies, foster the current generation of dance students in universities, and dedicating more time to the international symbiosis of dancer and audience member. With these adjustments and consistent maintenance, the public notion of the death of dance would greatly diminish.

## **Introduction**

### **The Death of Dance**

Author Jennifer Homans set off a firestorm when she wrote in the epilogue of her 2011 book about ballet history, *Apollo's Angels*, "I now feel sure that ballet is dying."

The attendance numbers for major dance companies in the United States and some developed countries abroad have drastically fallen in the last two decades. The professional and academic dance "boom" of the mid-1900s in America became a "bust" by the 1980s, but dance overall has entered the early 2000s with self-sustaining hope and maturity because of its universal dancer-audience symbiosis.

Standing the test of time is a demand of the arts. Dance is no exception, and it has overcome many challenges since its beginnings in civilization. In the professional dance world established companies deal with issues of the audience, funding, and innovation to remain a viable area of the arts for different nations. Dance in higher education strives to deal with similar issues but within the even more narrow setting of academia; dance programs/divisions seek departmental independence and relevance with the hope of an increasing but contained enrollment of dance majors each year. In addition, there are the challenges that affect dance in the twenty-first century that are different than the challenges dance experienced during the 1980s and before, mainly with technology and virtually viewing dance. Yet despite the challenges, there remains a proven symbiosis between dancers and audience members that transpires with each generation; it fluctuates but never disappears.

Dance is a performance art that relies on audience reaction, exchange, interaction, and/or conversation within the restrictions of momentary performances that can escape



the audiences' memory. There remains the eternal issue that the only way to actively become an audience member is to physically view dance performances. I argue that a physical audience member can include viewers of live dance or virtual dance due to the increasing changes in virtual trends among the public; dance is a three-dimensional art that has progressed onto two-dimensional screens. But audience members still cannot get the same experience from reading about a dance performance or looking at a dance performance photograph; these mediums lack the connection that only motion can offer.

The dancer(s) visual and moving performance is crucial to the active, physical audience-member experience of seeing movement and reacting to it, and conversely it is also crucial for the performing dancer(s) to have a connection to an involved audience member. The subtle but straightforward communication by the audience about dance before, during, and after performances exists in every dance form, and dancers will always have a deep connection to their intended audience. This is a symbiosis that has the worldwide potential for dance to cultivate and expand with the future. And while it is true that dying is a haunting threat for such a time-sensitive performance art as dance, it is not true to say that dance is quickly becoming nonexistent in the twenty-first century.

The professional and pre-professional dancers and audiences that survive together create and maintain dance, and as long as there remains movement to perform, there will be an audience to view it. The dancer-audience symbiosis exists in all areas of professional and academic dance across the world. To announce the definitive death of an art form is a very serious prediction, no matter how much personal belief is wrapped

around the statement.<sup>1\*</sup> Rather, dance researchers, performers, choreographers, and educators should acknowledge the conflicts of the past and present to move to the future, and help build generations of dancers and audience members who understand these trends and can take creative risks towards.

Professional and pre-professional dancers in the twenty-first century are united by their challenges. There are serious issues in finance, education, distribution, touring/outreach, archival, resources, etc. that a dance company and a dance department/division must recognize in order to move onwards. With all of these ever-changing issues, what element in all dance forms remains universal, acting as the overall bedrock for dance? My main literary resource, *The Performer-Audience Connection* (1983), provided the fundamental dance element. Dance scholar and professor, Judith Lynne Hanna, created a detailed text based on her performer and audience member dance and theater research. This text contains one common thread, one universal area of substance for dance; she refers to it as the performer and audience connection. I refer to this as the dance-audience symbiosis in order to condense and elaborate on what this universal element means to the past, present, and future of dance.

In *The Performer-Audience Connection* Hanna states, “The meaning of a performance is the interplay of sender-receiver intention-perception within its context” (17). Without either participant—the sender/dancer and the receiver/audience member—the performance does not exist, and death is eminent for the dance form. Dance depends on this symbiosis that occurs whenever a performance is collected from the dancer and

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1 Jennifer Homans used “ballet is dying” as a statement due to the death of George Balanchine and claimed a lack of major choreographers to follow him. She has since openly pondered and elaborated on her 2011 published statement. In 2014, she helped found and establish The Center for Ballet and the Arts with New York University in New York City.

recollected by a member of the viewing audience. The viewing audience includes both the dance audience—a more skilled audience, actively following dance as an art form—and the general public audience—members with little knowledge of dance, or little-to-no desire to seek out dance on their own. Dance in its entirety has never died nor will it ever die as long as humans exist to supply both participants who create, perform, and view dance in a adjustable symbiosis.

One question that can help this productive journey is, simply, how and where can dance grow with technology, the audience, and the dancers while continuing to nurture the dancer-audience symbiosis? I strongly believe the answers exist in higher education dance programs/divisions. Most significantly, answers for the present can be provided when dance majors from universities and audience members from different countries exchange and connect on an international scale, thus allowing the twenty-first century dancer-audience symbiosis to function in an academic closed-circuit of communication.

One reason why dance programs/divisions in universities are so vital for maintaining the dance world is that university dance students of this millennium, metaphorically hardwired to the flow of technology since primary school, are intuitively interested in working with new technology and connecting with dancers and audiences from around the world. Additionally, every year top universities in America generate resilient, innovative resources and present scholarly interdisciplinary studies, which cause cross-departmental and cross-cultural connections. Continuing to modernize dance with technology, cultivating audience attendance and interest with those modernizations, and providing access to international dancer-audience exchange opportunities are just a few answers that need to be used when addressing this death threat.

Dance forms in the West are not alone in dealing with new challenges, but because of the abundance of resources it is a large area where solutions could reside, spread, and contribute, and it is the starting point for my own research. The effect of time on dance should be surveyed in detail, and when we truly examine it, many observers will be surprised to find that strength remains in dance and its audience members across the globe, with a fundamental line of support stemming from academia. The issue is that the strength of the dance-audience symbiosis and the academic support of spreading dance international is not as emphasized to dancers (both professional and pre-professional), dance audience members, and the general public as it should be; today, the components of strength and support should go together and grow together.

The study of the dancer-audience symbiosis is complex. From the very start of my research I have realized these complexities and, ironically, contributed to the questions with more questions. This is not necessarily a negative contribution. By adding to the discussion with questions and providing answers about the state of dance in the twenty-first century, dance students, researchers, choreographers, and educators will be able to notably deflect any threats of death while also helping dance maintain its relevancy with the changing of time. I have formed two main chapters for this thesis: one chapter for the past collection of research about these issues—included for non-dancers specifically—and one chapter for current solutions in dance—mainly dealing with my own international dance study and two similar university experiences from young adult dance majors abroad.

Predominant solutions arise in international encouragement of dancers of higher education and audience members of dance. All Westernized dance forms in the more

recent century have forged bonds across the seas with dancers from many cultures. Historical context is provided on the international connections of dance and dance in higher education, with focus on the dance “boom” and “bust” in American universities during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Even more recently, dancers and choreographers have had to learn how to connect to the addition of virtual audience members intimately and honestly, as examples provided in Chapter 1 demonstrate. Chapter 1 will also address the technological advancements that are, supposedly, hindering some professional dance companies and pre-professional dance programs/divisions. In Chapter 2, I detour from Hanna’s cultural study of the performer-audience connection and focus my study on current international exchange of dance majors/minors. I also survey the transformation that dance has undergone in the twenty-first century with such fields as video dance/screen dance/dance on camera and utilizing social media tools. To help chart international exchange similarities I enlisted the help of three dance majors from three top universities in Texas who travelled to three different countries. Their experiences are noted in the form of online personal interviews, and I have appreciated their interest in my thesis and their devotion to dance.

As a mutable art, dance exists in a constant state of wonder and questioning; the solutions for this year might not be available or applicable next year. This is why I ended up with more questions towards the end of my study than I began with. To provide a solidified written assessment of dance is the ephemeral contraction, because dance is something that can never truly be explained or experienced in words, yet dance must be fully documented and researched in order to maintain its place in academia and not

remain silent to the general public. These issues presented do have resolutions that are actively in place with dance research that often goes unacknowledged.

The growing group of dance research available is not entirely recognized, which causes dance to appear as a silent art form to the general public and even dance audience members. This is another part of the death threat. I am encouraging a new generation of educated, passionate dance students, researchers, choreographers, and educators of the twenty-first century to spread dance research and knowledge to their audience members, and, eventually, to the general public in order for dance to not appear silent and diminished, dead. The understated dialogue that exists between dance researchers is of direct importance to this thesis as it helped me realize the fundamental connections between dance researchers worldwide. These connections by dance researchers directly impact dancers because researchers are intentionally observing the dominant direction of dance. And once the dancers are impacted, audiences on a national and global level are immediately impacted and, eventually, knowledge about dance creates another connection that trickles down to the general public.

The main goal of this thesis has always been to contribute to the study of the dancer-audience symbiosis with an updated voice and expanded experiences. I believe that dance will keep regenerating and renewing itself if capable countries can continue to embrace the newest technologies and dedicate more time to the international exchange of dancers and audience members, fostering the heart and soul of dance, the dancer-audience symbiosis. As dance scholar Judith Lynne Hanna said in a 2010 letter to *Dance Research Journal*, “Permit me to add to the dialogue.”

## Chapter One

### Initial Study, The Past

The motivation for this thesis began with *The Performer-Audience Connection*. Judith Lynne Hanna's research book on the intricacies in the performing arts and cultural discussions on dance was published in 1983; thirty-two years of dance history and technological advancements have passed since then, not to mention the ongoing transformations of cultural perceptions within many countries. Yet, the relationship between a performer and a viewer continues to be a principal element for dance. I began to entertain the idea of using *The Performer-Audience Connection* as my main source and jumping-off point because the questions posed in it are still relevant for dance today.

This thirty-two year gap, however, prompted me to look into dancer and audience connections and disconnections with a specialized look into university-based student dancers studying at today's top universities in Texas. How do dancers of today connect to the audience? What are the current benefits of dance locally and internationally? What are the implications of dance using present-day technology in universities and beyond? Why are university dance programs/divisions not a larger part of these discussions? I was confident that all of these concentrated questions share a common ground, the dancer-audience symbiosis, and that they must be addressed together in order to help the dance world. To add to Hanna's study, I am observing these specific areas of dance historically, culturally, and philosophically. And, ultimately, I wish to emphasize that the relationship between dancer and audience member is intrinsically and infinitely important to dance.

There are three participants in dance performances (surrounded by sub-participants such as tech crews, musicians, and designers of all sorts): the dancer, a performer who specializes in movement through time and space with energy, acting as an elevated viewer and promoter of dance—often times acting as a choreographer and dancer of a performance, too; the dance audience member, a viewer that has an established amount of knowledge and/or understanding of dance theory and/or history, one that actively seeks out dance performances for experience and pleasure; and the general public audience member, a viewer that has the most limited amount of knowledge and/or appreciation for dance in general, one that wanders into dance performance with little-to-no preconceived inclination and usually due to some sort of requirement to view a dance performance, as is the case with the majority of undergraduates in universities.

Susan Sontag, an American essayist, wrote that “dance *is* the dancer,” meaning that the performance is dominated by the dancers' physical and mental abilities—not just the choreography created for the performance (“Dancer and the Dance” 335). The performance and presentation of the choreography (or improvisation) by the dancer initiates a sense of a successful performance with the opportunity of a successful aesthetic experience to all audience members. P. W. Manchester, a British dance critic and historian, added labels to the dance audience members—specifically those of the Vic-Wells Ballet—to explain the three stages of experience: the first stage of “awestricken delight” that the audience members experience at a basic level and with little regard to the dancer or themselves; the second stage of “regulars” with experience in performances but still mostly delighted in the performance, clapping for their favorite dancers; the third stage of “the Old Guard” where “nothing is good enough for us,”



bursting with nostalgia for past performances and relishing in only their perceptions; and the last stage of “tolerance” of what has passed and what is to come in dance performances, allowing the dancer(s) and the audience member to converge as equals and promoters of dance (“The Audience” 332-333). These three stages can be experienced by both the dance audience and the general public, with the aid of the dancer. The dance audience can also have a valued connection to the dancers' lives and the creation of a performance which helps with a successful “fourth stage” experience during the three stages of the performance creation (before, during, and after). And with the right amount of dance knowledge and performance experience, the general public can also reach the dance audience on the “fourth stage,” seeking out performances based on desire and curiosity to expand their views on dance. This is one observation about the complexities of the dancer-audience symbiosis that prevails throughout time. But even with the dancer-audience symbiosis some might still ask, what is the nature of dance to the world?

A discussion about the impact of dance to humanity and its dynamic history is as necessary as the later discussions between dance and technology and the history of dance in higher education. The death of dance would mean the death of a significant art form that changes with humanity. Dance historian and critic John Martin famously noted that “movement is the most elementary physical experience for human life” (*Modern Dance* 7-8). Dance has always been part of the physical language of humankind, a type of human communication that is immediate and profound. The intention of dance is to collect movements and present them, perform them, and preserve them with experiences. And, in order to look at what is currently active or inactive, changing or unchanged, we must look to the past of dance for our future.

Dance is part of the fabric of all cultures, flexing and molding to the changes which those cultures face over time. To borrow from Immanuel Kant's philosophical theories, the basic foundation of dance—movement—in its essence is a free beauty, universally known and understood. And yet, the experience of dance is also all-encompassing for the individual and the community, and it does become prone to subjectivity later in the process of performance. In dance performances, dance participants sanction meaningful expressions and connections for the viewers in the community and worldwide, thus rewarding both individual creativity and group conversation (Hanna, *To Dance* 7). Social bonding is one positive effect that is obviously part of dance, as seen in ritual dances and ceremonial dances across the globe. In addition, cultural exchange is inevitable with the social bonding of the dancer-audience symbiosis. The symbiosis of the dancer and the audience is resistant. There are dances in various cultures that reflect all kinds of universal emotions and all kinds of universal occasions, because humans continue to find the need to express themselves with movement (Martin 9). And when different people gather together to either perform or view, different dance forms and styles are pollinated across cultures by the dancer and the audience members. If either participant is absent, no exchange is created. Moreover, dance can help move entire communities out of the darkness of destruction and death because it is a shared experience that develops into a search for a safe space to communicate the expressions of many people.

One strong example of this exchange is observed with European dance in the early to mid-1900s. People living in Europe had to deal with various war-time devastations, mostly during World War I and II. Many dance forms in different countries

felt the waves of destruction during WWI and WWII, and dancers quickly united; thus, there are evident international cross-pollination of dance forms in Europe today. These devastations directly and famously affected European ballet companies and modern dance ideologies, as well as less directly with various dance forms and cultures. Traces of influences from a number of Russian folk dances are seen in European ballet because of dancers interacting during a time of radical cultural connections. Traditional dance forms and audience members in China and Japan were also impacted for the first time by German and French modern dancers and choreographers. Many audience members in Asia were curious about dance forms from the West and hoped to modernize their country with artistic exchange, as seen later with the official spreading of Butoh in the 1960s<sup>2\*</sup>. This would not have been possible had dance forms not exchanged traditions and techniques because of nations interacting during a time of war. The dancer-audience symbiosis of different forms of dance merged with cultural exchange to help birth new dance forms and new bonds (Manning and Benson 218). Likewise, the dancers and audience members of these eras experienced a fundamental dance-audience symbiosis that helped heal many communities and individuals with dance.

With dance there is a central formula: the dancers create and perform physically while the audience reacts and contributes emotionally. Modern dance, in particular, has been a breeding ground for this participating exchange of ideas, beliefs, and expressions; it is a dance form that is irreversibly tied to the dance-audience symbiosis. In the early 1900s, the impact of modern dance upon the public was exhilarating. Modern dance

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2 Due to the cultural exchange of the mid- to late-1900s, the French Surrealist movement had a large impact on Butoh pioneer, Tatsumi Hijikata, as did various forms of technology transported from the West.

allowed individual escape into reality—rather than away from reality— combating the established rules of the fantastical realms of ballet or the constraints of folk and social dance. Modern dance also immediately embraced certain technological elements from the start of the twentieth century onwards. And because dance has a recent but intimate connection to technology that is generally understood in the dance world, dance historians often ask in response, “Who does not use technology?” (Naugle 460). Performances by early twentieth-century modern dance pioneer Louie Fuller involved theatrical lighting and film devices that had never before been used by a dancer. Later in dancing history, American choreographer Alwin Nikolais created an entire aesthetic based on the mixing of technology and movement<sup>3\*</sup> This trend of using technology in dance has been explored ever since the beginning of modern dance (and will be looked at further later on). Likewise, later on modern dance in the 1960s and 1970s moved away from the exclusivity of the theatre and into the open, everyday world with site-specific dance works. The restraints of theatre worship that occurred previously in many dance forms is no longer the only performance option for choreographers, dancers, and audience members. The dancer-audience symbiosis entered the middle of the twentieth-century with a more balanced dancer and audience participation.

Modern dance was, and still is, a dependent dance form in that requires more personalized insight and thought from all participants of the performance. This differed from the previous Westernized dance forms that were absorbed as entertainment and spectacle, a product for the audience that separated performers from viewers. Dancers in previous Westernized dance forms were widely viewed as above the general public and

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3 Although Fuller's choreography is rarely performed today, many of Nikolais' productions are still performed by major dance companies across the global.

sensationalized by dance fanatics. In terms of the three stages of experience, dance audiences and the general public were stuck in between the “second” and “third” stages, and modern dance caused a lot of commotion. The new and revolutionary modern dancers in the early twentieth century gained fame as individuals that created their own new art, rather than individuals presenting a historic dance form. The “fourth” stage of experience was achieved almost at once with a new established dance audience of members from the old dance audience and the general public. This created an unique fragment from the normal dance-audience symbiosis, which proves the symbiosis is able to be altered. The historic progression from “the romantic myth of the isolated artist in the garret” to the iconic common individual of art is still in effect today and remains a social subtext of the dancer-audience symbiosis (Popat 13). The dancer-audience symbiosis was tested during the start of modern dance but remained crucial to the entire process of creation and performance because, amongst the worship of the dancer as an individual, the audience was always essential to all modern dance performances. Yet, the general public did not know how to react entirely to this new movement expression and the connections to new technology—with audio, set design, and lighting—that it commonly utilized.

During the mid-1900s, when modern dance was past its initial stages of creation, Martin described modern dance as a confusing performance experience for the common public because modern dance sought to “externalise personal, authentic experience” (*Modern Dance* 19). With this power to connect the dancers to the individuals within the audience, modern dance grew and maintained its importance well into the late twentieth-century. But there is another power that exists in the dancer-audience symbiosis for all

dance forms. Hanna begins her study by stating in her introduction of *The Performer-Audience Connection*, “The common denominator of the dancer-audience relation ... is power” (8). Power from the audience to the dancer and the dancer to the audience is given during performances that are shared, viewed, and experienced; dance relies on this visual and mental test of human capability. This power exchange can be observed by non-dancers immediately during nearly every dance form, because it is so basic and elemental to dance performances. And the power that is given and received can be amplified if the dance audience and the general audience are in the “fourth stage” of experience with the dancer. Additionally, the dancer-audience symbiosis with its generated power gives dance the ability to live since, on some level, both participants remember and invest in the dance before, during, and after performances (Hanna, *Performer-Audience* 8). Hanna's earlier dance research book, *To Dance is Human* (1979), stated six essential definitions on dance which helped guide her to this connection between performer-audience: “Dance is physical behavior; Dance is cultural behavior; Dance is social behavior; Dance is psychological; Dance is political behavior; Dance is economic behavior” (3-4). Dance is a part of every aspect of humanity; it is a powerful tool for communication. The power in dance is widely accessible because there are universally understood movements across cultures, which suggests that the dancer-audience symbiosis is timeless and boundless (Hanna, *Performer-Audience* 8). What seems to effect this symbiosis, however, are the additional time-altering changes we experience. Hanna's research delved into the performance understandability of dance between cultures with success, but what is happening in dance in the twenty-first century differs from the changes during the 1980s and before.

As an audience member, experiencing a performance only once and fighting with the mind's limits to remember and recall movements and emotions afterwards is an intense exercise for human capabilities that also strengthens to notions of a performer-audience symbiosis. The ephemeral aspect of dance was once the most distinctive aspect that this art form had to claim before the end of the twentieth century. Surprisingly, ephemerality is not the culprit of the death threat onto dance, and it should be embraced as a unique dance trait that is now transforming with viewing dance performances online.

The ephemeral aspect is partially severed with viewing dance virtually—as is the three dimensional aspect until three dimensional dance technologies become more advance—but something new in the dancer-audience symbiosis arises and replaces these aspects. With a simple click an online audience member can: save dance performances for an extended period of time and rewatch them at any moment, anywhere, for any reason; join in during a live stream of a dance rehearsal and participate by using social media; or can Snapchat with choreographers and dancers for a brief connection to the creative process. But can a virtual viewer still gain the necessary audience skills in recalling and remembering movements and emotions, forging the dancer-audience symbiosis? It has become a bit of both, and the online dancer-audience symbiosis of the twenty-first century is based on direct personalization and individuality. Lisa Marie Naugle, Associate Professor of Dance in the Dance Department of the School of the Arts at the University of California, Irvine, describes, “Since what we do has a presence and consequences in the cultural domain, thinking in terms of what any computer technology is going to do for us is important” (“Technique/Technology/Technique” 459). Technology is undoubtedly part of the existence of dance today, as reflected in the

interests and trends of all audience members and dancers. In the article “Technique/Technology/Technique” Naugle explains:

Technology can help build bridges between art forms, and it offers artists and educators expanded options for expressing ideas. In dance education, technology can be a powerful medium for exchange of knowledge and beliefs by people of different cultures. Through the use of the Internet we have a chance to communicate with people all over the world. The question is, toward what kind of interactions are we working? (460). This dancer-audience symbiosis, now rapidly connected to technology in a fascinating and new way, is still essential for viewing dance. Dance forms still struggle with this new addition, but it has been proven to contain new and interesting aspects that are needed in order to stay away from the death threat.

Sita Popat, Head of the School of Performance and Cultural Industries and Chair in Performance and Technology at the University of Leeds, provided insight on the ongoing studies of dance and technology in the twenty-first century with her book *Invisible Connections: Dance, Choreography, and Internet Communities* (2006). In many ways, the Internet has opened up connections and added new aspects to dance that had once been unimaginable for collaborations between choreographers, dancers, and audiences (Popat 1). The key addition that online technology contributed was accessibility. Online visual and audio communications in dance include images, videos, sounds, and animations that are constantly spreading across the globe via the web. Popat states, “This new perspective could be envisioned as a metaphorical shift of the traditional proscenium arch in its division of artist and viewer” (2). With online dance, the dancers are the conductors of long-distance collaboration and the audience becomes



the reactors to collaboration, or in some cases, participants of active online collaboration with dancers and choreographers. The personalized response from each dancer and audience member becomes essential to the dance experience, and the ephemeral aspect is primarily tied to the individual's experience rather than reliance on the fleeting live performance.

The changes in technology which have been and/or are used in the dance world are plentiful. The Information Age sparked the ability for humans to communicate and study many areas of life in new ways, ushering in the generation of social media. The thirty-two year gap between *The Performer-Audience Connection* and today includes the birth of multiple groups of social applications which need to be addressed and discussed because, unlike the notion that dance is dead, dance is indeed constantly expanding and exploring, but there are new issues present. To help bring an understanding on the threat of death versus actual death of an art form I turn to the sister arts of dance.

The “death threat” is not a threat that is exclusive to dance; many areas of art have been labeled dead after drastic generational changes in social trends and technology. When looking to similar areas of the arts, the film industry with movies and photography resonates surprisingly well with dance; film and dance have had to both prove their relevance as a serious art form. For instance, 35 mm film is not as popularly used by directors as it was two decades ago because of the digital format revolution and computer generated film style that the public has come to know and love. But today, filming a 35 mm movie is still upheld as a serious, professional craft in the movie industry with a handful of prominent directors utilizing it for its quality and historical value. To translate to dance, classic full-length ballets of the Romantic and Classical eras are not too popular

with current dance audiences who crave innovation—full length ballets like *The Nutcracker* are more popular with the intended viewers of the general public, acting as a gateway performance to ballet. But classic full-length ballets are still performed and revised by major ballet companies because they have a historical quality which attracts new viewers to ballet.

Another example from the sister arts—music—is the explosion of vinyl records of the mid-1900s which faced a rapid decrease in the late 1900s due to new digitalized audio formats. Vinyl records have since found a valuable niche market in the 2000s and added to the growing number of options for enjoying music. Tap dance in America is not as popular as it once was due to a number of lost opportunities to “catch-up” to social trends, but tap dance has a special niche audience as well as a following of young dance students. In dance studios across America, tap is included in nearly every block of introductory technique classes for young children, and a few carry on with it and integrate tap into other areas of dance. And so, dance is not alone in the rash proclamations of death during the changing of eras. What makes dance different is that the audience will always remain attached to the performances of dancers, fueling a stream of necessity to add modifications and creativity to dance as a whole.

New dancer-audience connections and disconnections are ever present, and they need to be accepted, examined, and questioned in order to fully understand the dancer-audience symbiosis of today. Hanna’s initial research into performance and movement communication in *The Performer-Audience Connection* helped frame the structure of serious research that technology and dance are building upon. This occurrence must have been experienced during the thirty-two year gap that Hanna lived through with previous

dance theories and issues challenging her dance theories and issues during the 1980s. Accordingly, it is imperative that dance researchers continue to add to each other's past experiences and findings, helping to present a contemporary conversation about the present issues for the future of dance.

When looking at the Information Era it is important to first note the ceaseless power of social media; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Wordpress, Snapchat, Vimeo, Reddit, Vine, LinkedIn, Skype, and Tumblr were all created and/or peaked in the twenty-first century. These are all social media applications that are/have been used for personal entertainment by this generation's dance students, researchers, choreographers, and educators, as well as the dance audience member and the general public. Between the 1980s and the early 2000s, the new online applications that followed the Digital Revolution have created new situations for dance to consider not only with communication but also with dance performance and the dancer-audience symbiosis. To endorse a new community atmosphere across the globe, the dance world needs social media. In regards to using technology and social media to make connections using dance, Popat states: "Since online creative collaborations are likely to involve people from both the general community and the professional or semi-professional arenas, devising methods appear to offer an approach to creativity that supports a range of approaches as well as promoting a sense of community" (17). Social bonding and cultural exchange can occur online instantaneously, which opens a unique connection that dance participants are embracing and utilizing today. Online connections casually bring the dancer and the audience member together, leveling the playing field and opening pathways for creative collaborative investigation.

In *Invisible Connections* Popat states, “Since the beginning of the twenty-first century a number and variety of information and communications technologies is available and their significance in society have soared globally, particularly in the Western world” (142). Today’s groupings of social media also shift and develop as time moves onwards. With each group of comings, there are even more goings in social media applications. In the course of less than a decade, Facebook ferociously replaced Myspace and iTunes dominated Napster, for instance. As recently as February 2015, Twitter and Facebook have continued their public battle for control over media organizations—which include professional dance companies and university dance programs/divisions—and the dominate sharing rights of articles, videos, photos, etc. over the Internet (Thompson). The previously mentioned changes in the dancer-audience symbiosis, and dance in general, occurred over the span of decades; this is a recognized change that needs to occur in dance every year. So, the question then becomes, can the dance world stay as constantly attentive to new technologies as they are being rapidly produced, judged, and eliminated?

Virtually viewing dance online is entirely new, and it continuously advances well past the last decade with technological updates and social media modifications. But this rapid technological growth is experienced directly and instantly by university students. A generally accepted statement is that university students in the twenty-first century spend a great deal of time browsing social media and online sites. However, when dance majors/minors utilize social media and technology for dance creations, they begin to acknowledge that they are the future of dance, and that they can provide solutions and raise questions about dance with different forms of technology. According to Torgeir Waterhouse, an international leader in technology education for young students, along

with providing a diverse education on technology, the young minds of this millennium need to be reminded that they are leaders of the future because they have the most potential to know and grow with technology: “[Kids are] those people who will someday wake up and say, in the words of John Perry Barlow, ‘I am from cyberspace ... I am all about the future’” (Reissman 2015). The dancer-audience symbiosis can be built around the creative engagements occurring online and the technological discoveries utilized by dance; after all, this creative usage of technology has been in place since the start of many art forms, and certainly since the start of modern dance. Richard Povall, UK-based artist and researcher, states that “Artists, in fact, have often been creators of new technologies, refusing to be satisfied by currently available tools” (“A Little Technology” 455). The additional encouragement of a not only a basic but diverse education in technology that builds from primary school will help promote the dance-audience symbiosis in higher education as students explore with the current technologies and help collaborate with future technologies. With these modifications dance programs/divisions will truly mimic the spirit of the era with creative innovation.

And this carries over into a brief discussion about the dance in higher education. The majority of my research into this area of history was collected from a book written by Thomas K. Hagood, associate professor and chair of the Department of Dance at Florida International University. *A History of Dance in American Higher Education (2001)* covers the birth of American dance programs/divisions up until the recent hints of resurgence in the 1990s. The residing issue of the death threat for dance in higher education is “that for more Americans dance education was of little concern and of peripheral interest at best” (Hagood 35). With a substantial amount of dance classes from

a universal curriculum and the opportunity to collaborate and cross-pollinate with various disciplines, dance majors/minors of this century are eager to share their knowledge with all audiences through dance, helping the dancer-audience symbiosis live within the great halls of academia.

The university was created as a whole to deepen Western culture, but it also helped expand on international relations, bringing young and matured academic thinkers and innovators together for the greater good (Hagood 19). The addition of dance into higher education was an important step for cultural and creative awareness in America, matching Europe which had already placed a high value on the arts in institutions. Dance was first introduced to American higher education institutions in 1913 by Gertrude Colby as an equal degree concept of physical education and pedagogy (Hagood 56). From the beginnings at the Speyer School of Teachers College at Columbia University, the academic dance curriculum advanced into a minor in the 1920s under the guidance of Margert H'Doubler (Hagood 98). And it continued to grow throughout the mid-1900s with separate programs and divisions that offered B.F.A.s and M.F.A.s in prominent universities across America<sup>4\*</sup>.

From the 1930s to the 1980s dance in higher education was strengthened immensely, with a following “boom” of dance between 1965 and 1980: “a period of significant and sustained growth in the numbers of students pursuing a dance major, and in the number of departments offering this degree” (Hagood 153 and 218). During these early years, the dancer-audience symbiosis fused to the positive mentality of society;

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4 “The trend beyond separate, arts related dance departments began first in women’s liberal arts colleges, especially those with a strong tradition in John Dewey’s educational philosophies; Sarah Lawrence College 1935, and Adelphi College, 1938, in New York; Bennington in 1940; and Mills College of California, in 1941” (Hagood 123).

dance in higher education was acknowledged by the general public, “its philosophy constructed and its technique considered scientifically” (Martin 91). However, the “boom” ended with the dance “bust” following the late 1980s as “enrollments in the liberal arts, humanities, and other non-vocational academic programs declined drastically” (Hagood 248). The late 1980s and 1990s brought a new issue, poisoning the dance-audience symbiosis of higher education: “A number of deeply rooted and conflicting cultural and educational factors had come together to make second class citizens of those who would choose a theoretical path in dance” (Hagood 262). Suddenly the dancers—in this case pre-professional dance majors and minors—were set apart from the audience members outside of academia. For the general public, a degree in dance appeared useless, frivolous, or unnecessary, and even today it is still a bitter battle to prove the worth and value of a dance degree to the general public of America. The rising and falling trends in academia prove that the dance-audience symbiosis is in a state of continuous fluctuation; consequently, a potential revival for the future of dance programs/divisions is on the horizon as educators in universities work to find a new place for degrees in American society and dance majors/minors recapture their historic value.

Ultimately, it is with thanks to these pioneers of dance education—Margaret H'Doubler, Martha Hill, John Martin, and Mary Jo Shelly—that the curriculum of a dance major in academia is no longer limited to the label of physical education, and it is known to not only be useful for the body but for the mind, too. One reoccurring question for dance programs/divisions remains: what connections are there between the dance and “everything else”—meaning the established major fields of study—in universities? What is often unknown to the general public is that dance in higher education is a young but

established field of study with multiple areas of focus available within a dance degree; undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees all contain “dance technique, choreography, performance, history, education, and science,” with the current additions of technology in the form of video dance/screen dance/dance on camera (Hagood 257). Consequently, all forms of dance in higher education will have more opportunities to thrive when the dancer-audience symbiosis is nurtured by the current generation of dancers and audience members. In discussing the pioneer of dance in higher education, Margret H'Doubler, and her lasting legacy to answer this question, Hagood states:

H'Doubler's legacy is in the idea that dance, as field of study, included course work in the science of movement (kinesiology), practice in developing fundamental movement skills (technique), understanding historical perspectives (dance history), manipulating movement creatively (composition), understanding the relation of movement to rhythm (rhythmic analysis), how to teach the body to move (teaching methods), and developing an understanding of classic and contemporary thinking on the moving body (dance philosophy). (99)

This outline of core dance course work is included in nearly all B.F.A., M.F.A., and Ph.D. dance programs/divisions in American universities, and most definitely in all of the top-notch dance programs/divisions in Texas. Dance majors/minors are constantly learning how the path of dance as physical education expanded during the mid-1900s to connect dance and art, history, science, nutrition, writing, etc., and these realizations are ongoing with dance and technology. Once these dance majors/minors acquire this knowledge, they feel more inclined to share their dancing history and collaborate with



“everything else” in universities. In spite of the lower level of trust and attention from the general public, dance programs/divisions continue to survive largely because of their regenerative resource of incoming students with a high level of interest in a dance degree. In 1983, Hanna writes, “Only recently have semiotic studies turned to the performing arts” (11). Enthusiastically, I can announce that in 2015 the bond between semiotic studies and dance is actually an area of intense study in major universities across the globe. For instance, NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts offers a Ph.D. in Performance Studies, which includes a detailed and highly regarded dance semiotics focus. This is one such serious example of how much has changed in academia for dance since *The Performer-Audience Connection*.

It is up to dance majors/minors to value their unique dancing history of the past and present. Without the initial value and exploration from dance majors/minors in their own field of study and, later, with “everything else,” the outdated notions from the general public that students of the liberal arts and fine arts are “second class citizens” will continue to belittle dance degrees at all levels. The contemporary realization that dance in higher education can be: used by any number of academic disciplines; accepted by the student dance audience and the student general public; promoted by dance majors/minors who have been trained in the growing areas of dance is fundamental to the future improvement of dance worldwide. The dancer-audience symbiosis lives and breathes with the waves of new dance majors and minors in universities. And to help amplify this expedient symbiosis, international interactions of dancers and audience members with dance performances are indispensable.

## Chapter Two

### Travel Study, The Present

A student perspective of the dancer aspect of the dancer-audience symbiosis is just as vital as any study into professional dancers and companies. Student bodies are the heartbeat of universities and should thus be a target for dance departments/divisions in relation to both viewing live and virtual performances. Additionally, students who are connected to dance as both dancers and dance audience members—actively viewing dance performances and seeking dance opportunities—are often the silent group with the most power; they can reach out to the remaining majority of the university's general public audience and can provide resources for all public audience members whom they come into contact with during the academic year. Dance programs/division need to return to the realization that university students as dancers and audience members are just as important as the more emphasized parent audience members—as such, parent audience members act as hybrid audience members between dance audience and general public audience, yet have very limited power in the collaborative and creative processes. The study of the dancer-audience symbiosis is necessary to expand the growth of live performances within university dance programs while keeping up with an expanding technologically reliant online audience.

The ways of viewing dance have expanded exceptionally in the twenty-first century, and this contributes to an on-going surplus of potential dance audience members who had previously been overlooked due to distance. This art form that once had negative connotations of elitism and isolationism can now be opened up to further the symbiosis between dancers and audience members. The restrictions of dance setting,

content, movement, mood, etc. are constantly updating and opening up as the twenty-first century evolves. Popat adds, “If the limitations of performance ephemerality could be abated or removed, so that viewers could view the art work in their own time and repeatedly, would art become more approachable?” (*Invisible Connections 2*). In the late-twentieth century interaction through the Internet suddenly became an option for dancers and choreographers to connect to audience members during the creative process of a performance, causing an innovative shared sense of power between both dance participants. The Internet also allowed audience members to react and contribute before and after dance performances from their cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc.; audience experience could be observed through the communities created online. These communities help contain these immediate, unfiltered reactions to the forum format with such actions as public comments and blog posts that allowed an informal experience of the personalized contribution as an audience member. This was an addition that many young professional dance companies and university dance programs/divisions eagerly gravitated towards, because using the Internet was quickly becoming a cultural phenomenon at the end of the twentieth century:

The mid-1900s saw the rapid expansion of the World Wide Web and with it came widely available public Internet access, with people newly connected via their modems to the global network and all its possibilities. The text-based email system and the Multiple User Dimension or Multiple User Dungeon (MUDS) and MOOS were augmented by the visual possibilities of the World Wide Web and Internet videoconferencing software, and all of these began to shift from the office into the home and

social life of individuals. Text, images, movies, animations provide a multitude of ways for the individual to represent him or herself online.

(Popat 48)

Online connections between viewers can be made at an extremely rapid rate; however, disconnections can be made just as quickly if the dance world isolates or ignores the use of such technology advancements. Live performances faced the severe era of reduced finances for companies, donors, and audience members during the 1990s and early 2000s; thus, there was a drop in live attendance for many years and dance became mysterious to the majority of the general public. Now, financial tensions have dissolved somewhat and the dance world is trying to return to a state of “boom” while remaining relevant to virtual audience members of the twenty-first century. Using technology to create and view dance allows an intriguing hope that the performance can be shared and experienced by a vast amount of people, extending the dancer-audience symbiosis from small local communities with live performances to expanded international communities with virtual performances (Popat 1). This new and exciting combination of local and international virtual members and live members is unique to this era, and it is generally observed in universities today. Yet, there is a downside to this twenty-first century tech “boom.” The amount of successful professional dance companies utilizing and creating technology for dance is small. Povall provides some insight:

This is largely true for two reasons: the amount of time involved in getting to know the tools, and the amount of time necessary to develop work with all participant present. These kinds of pieces are by definition expensive to

make, not because of the technology cost, but because of the time required. (“A Little Technology” 456)

The majority of professional dance companies can barely afford to be innovative in this sense. However, dance programs/divisions in higher education can find the means to explore and provide housing for professional choreographers and dancers to create dance technologies for the specific department/division as well as with various academic disciplines and campus organizations. Finding the resources for successful creations of dance technology in the university setting will help bring the dancer-audience symbiosis into the twenty-first century.

In terms of general public and dance audience members, the traditional structure and connection are currently affected by the drastic changes in these new technologies. The general public audience member can be a group of friends behind a computer screen or a city commuter with a cell phone on the subway; attention is a commodity and engaging in quick but honest interactions online is a struggle. On campus, general public audience members are also, if not even more, absorbed in social media, living life with all of the technological additions of the twenty-first century at hand. But who are these faceless, nameless audience members? The individual is obviously emphasized in all social media applications, and it should follow that organizations employ individual aspects of marketing. Today, generalizing a group of participants is a dangerous road to go down for dance companies and dance research. Universities can find these gaps to fill by becoming familiar with the individual on one of the many flourishing social networks as well as live conversation and networking before and after live performances. In an online article from *Capacity Interaction* Facebook is noted for its dominance and

relevancy for the arts; “Facebook is, at least right now, a near perfect environment for arts marketers. Over 70% of US internet users have a Facebook account (57% of users age 50-64 btw) and more than half of users log in daily. Facebook is a visual medium” (Social Media Strategy). Simply responding to comments or questions on Facebook statuses, for example, can generate a relationship between the dance organization, the dancer, and the dance audience member and the general public audience member. The smart phone generation is quick to forget unmemorable connections made online; it is possible for dance organizations to take advantage of this and try to become as memorable and as marketable as possible, without diminishing their own company morals and codes of conduct as artists. Famously, the Mark Morris Dance Group, the longstanding professional company by American choreographer Mark Morris, has found solid ground on all visual networks: Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, and YouTube. Constant updates through photography and status posts by company members help this company remain connected to the dance audience that have followed them for years and continue to watch them live and virtually. And through more traditional marketing campaigns with such national organizations as PBS, the Mark Morris Dance Group can connect to general public audience members and direct them to their interactive social media pages (*Mark Morris Dance Group*). This is an example of a professional dance company that is part of the twenty-first century conversation, and it is a model for university dance programs/division. It cannot be ignored that creating such a dance organization as the Mark Morris Dance Group does not come without its drawbacks; Social Media Strategy remarks that, “It takes long-term planning and strategic investment in the right people, the right training and the budgets to support transitioning an arm of

your marketing department into a media company that produces compelling content” (“If Your Say”). In public and private dance programs/divisions the “long-term planning and strategic investment” mentioned takes even longer and often is not granted until the end of the decade, when technological changes and university students had already come and gone. Yet, it is important to upgrade and transition as best as possible to give dancers and audience members the best chance to view dance performances as the twenty-first century dictates.

One of the greatest dance arenas that this century has founded is with video dance/screen dance/dance on camera. Inside of this new medium contain dances that are filmed as performances with no additional interference, dances that are created and edited to create a new performance, and dances that mix with live performances and provide a mood and atmosphere for the overall performance. Creating and viewing dance performances for the screen is a twenty-first century event that all universities should take advantage of, because video dance is on the forefront of becoming a recognized specialization within dance degrees. However, as virtually viewing dance performances enters the mainstream, the threat of death is echoed by some dance purists, as dance for many purist dance audience members is still a strict two-dimensional art form; the three dimensional aspect is daunting and confusing to some. In 1983, Hanna argued that “a live encounter in theatrical performance or everyday life has the excitement of the possibility of the unexpected that film performance lacks. Film also creates some distortion in what is presented and how” (*Performer-Audience* 16). Although this might have been the main death threat as dance started to move to the two-dimensional realm with serious video dances created during the 1980s, it is not entirely black and white today because dance is

currently embracing creations through video dance with festivals, workshops, awards, and classes about this medium. It is true that the “distortion” that Hanna mentions is evident in unsuccessful dance and technology endeavors. On the other hand, “distortion” has been embraced or enhanced in various forms of video dance to create a new atmospheres and aesthetic experiences to viewing dance virtually, ushering in a new connection within the dancer-audience symbiosis. Choreographers of video dance pieces are pushing the limits and expectations of audience members, and asking questions about performance aesthetics that could not be possible through any live medium.

Consequently, video dance has leaped into a vast arena of study and contribution in higher education nationally and internationally. The current general public audience is intrigued and dazzled by successful video dance endeavors, most of which start at the university level. Dance audience members have hinted knowledge on video dance creations, but for the most part are only starting to become familiar with the medium. All the while, dance students in dance departments/divisions from top universities are taking classes, producing work, and becoming familiar with video dance events locally and internationally. Accordingly, video dance is imperative to the international contribution of dance creations that are using technology. The Sans Souci Festival of Dance Cinema is one impressive example of how curious dance creators are constantly adding to dance by producing and sharing dance videos nationally and internationally through a university-based festival. It is also important to note that this is a yearly festival that is funded and supported by a major U.S. university, the University of Colorado at Boulder. Sans Souci is also a touring festival that held video dance performances in Guatemala, Mexico, Barcelona, and Germany (*Sans Souci*). The Dance Films Association is another



organization that was created in the late twentieth century and reacts with the twenty-first century for the sole purpose of expanding this medium. This nationally recognized forty-year-old Association helps eager choreographers and dancers produce “documentaries, shorts, features, experimental works, and music videos that celebrate the immediacy of dance combined with the intimacy of film” through touring, programs, and a monthly lab that connects audience members to dancers and choreographers working on video dance pieces (*Dance Films*). Still, the best a university dance department/division can do to remain active and alert in the twenty-first century and beyond, balancing the struggles and rewards of art, is engage in international exchange of dance majors.

There are professional organizations that are dedicated entirely to the main goal of international dancer exchange on a university level. The American Dance Aboard program launched by Dance/USA has provided one such example of proactive expansion of dance students and viewers. While American Dance Aboard allows access, support, and training for students who are passionate about dance, they also provide vital connections between pre-professional dancers and new general public audiences, building bridges that will carry from the present into the future. This cultural engagement of dancer and audience member encourages creative endeavors, such as video dance performances and social network experiments, while allowing a traditional experience of live dance performances, workshops, and forums.

To help bring answers to the gaps that appear in dance departments/divisions, I offer the solution of international dancer exchange. I have selected three dance majors who all travelled abroad to three different countries exclusively for dance opportunities. All of the dancer majors were personally interviewed for their experiences about their

exchange. In addition, they reflect the market of both modernized dancers and dance audience members; they understand viewing live and virtual dance performances on an equal level, guiding the dancer-audience symbiosis on the dancer end to a contemporary meeting ground with general public audience members. To provide a focus on Texas State University's current dance division, I interviewed one dance major who embodies the spirit of this dance division by engaging in enthusiastic and intelligent interactions locally and internationally. The two additional dance majors who contributed to this thesis supply the noted variety in how international travel/exchange is conducted by individual university dance departments/divisions in Texas.

The first dance major I contacted and interviewed is Anna Ingram, a 20-year-old sophomore (at the time of this thesis) studying dance at The University of Texas in Austin (UT). Ingram traveled to Angers, France as part of a yearly international student exchange of dance majors. This traditional exchange included four months of studying and performing with The Centre National de Danse Contemporaine (CNDC) by four BFA dance majors, and the following year, a handful of CNDC members studied and performed at UT. CNDC is an inventive professional contemporary dance company and school that began in 1978. Under the current direction of Robert Swinston, a director who combines all fields of dance experience with innovative adventure, CNDC aims to "transmit to the public the foundations of a creative process, educate youth and to showcase the CNDC local, national, and international" (*Angers*). While safely tucked away in northwestern France, Ingram and her fellow dance majors from UT became quickly acquainted with CNDC dancers from the school, living and training with them daily. This total immersion of a new culture and situation allowed Ingram to broaden her

horizons as a dancer and American citizen. She cheerfully stated, “I immediately knew that these students were living to dance. They all were passionate and curious about learning new things about one another... Their passion translated directly into the atmosphere built in the dance classes during the whole semester” (Ingram). The dance-atmosphere that Ingram speaks of is used daily by many young adult dancers across the globe, and it is vital for the dancer-audience symbiosis to have this exchange of dancer-to-dancer, especially with dancers from different cultures, because all dancers can become completely self-aware with him/herself. In addition to the dancers Ingram encountered, the study of dance was treated in a professional but creative way at CNDC. Ingram was aware of the constant appreciation and acceptance of dance in France, from dance members and all audience members; the death threat became a minor notion that had no place in each space they performed in:

After the performances though was different compared to what I’ve usually experienced in the past in America. There was always a little reception for the dancers and the audience to mingle around in. Drinks and bite size food for all. This is when the audience and performers were all able to chat and ask questions to one another. I loved these time, because of 1. free food but 2. it gave me the chance to talk to the audience about the content and structure of what was performed. It was also a time to meet people from Angers. People who came were either friends or people that just wanted to watch dance. (Ingram)

A key moment occurs when the dancer can exchange with all audience members in such a way as Ingram experienced. And because of this university provided opportunity and

following interaction of shared power, Ingram has been forever impacted and can testify to the importance of international dance exchange.

The next dance major I interviewed was Michelle Kaase, a 21-year-old junior (at the time of this thesis) studying modern dance and psychology at Texas Christian University (TCU). Kaase traveled to London, England for an extensive exchange with the prominent dance program at the University of Roehampton. Located in London, Roehampton Dance has been rated the number one center for dance research in the United Kingdom for a past decade. The department boasts undergraduate and postgraduate degrees of a highly esteemed manner with supervision from various Ph.D. dance professionals. As a yearlong student of Roehampton Dance “residencies, workshops, an annual festival, and research seminars, result in a lively and stimulating artistic-scholarly community” (*Roehampton*). Collaboration between dancers is one major aspect of the dance department at Roehampton. Additionally, the Centre for Dance Research (CDR) at Roehampton strengthens the professional academic standing of dance across the globe. Without a studious and adventurous center like CDR situated in a major international city, dance would be silent and the threat would take precedent for the general public. In terms of the dancer-audience symbiosis, Kaas experienced no direct performance opportunities or audience interaction but instead gained a developed dancer perspective, similar to Ingram’s perspective, which helped inform her for the rest of her time at TCU and beyond. With a scholarship to cover most of the TCU study abroad expenses of travel, Kasse stayed in London for fifteen weeks and focused on academic study and technique classes with no official performance participation. Acting as the first dance major to study abroad at Roehampton for a full semester term, Kaas enveloped herself in

the intense technique classes and academic courses provided. While at Roehampton, Kaas came to understand how dance is treated in London:

I quickly realized that dance and the arts in general have much more respect in London and around Europe than they do in the US. I felt like almost everyone around the city was interested in the arts and in some way involved. I found that to be very different than back home. (Kaas)

This international awareness of the treated of dance is important for dance majors to experience firsthand. As an American dance major in the twenty-first century experiencing dance events from a new perspective, Kaas rightfully mentions the disconnection that arises in the American general public about dance. The threat of death is only active and circulating if the general public audience members are sold on it and ignorant of the importance and knowledge of dance, as well as all arts, in countries abroad. By providing international exchange opportunities at the university level with dance majors, the threat of death will diminish and the dancer-audience symbioses can continue to evolve instead of detach and help create more dance audience members from general public audience members.

Lastly, I personally travelled with and interviewed Mariana Rosas, a 24-year-old senior (at the time of this thesis) studying dance at Texas State University (TXST). I applied and was awarded funds from The Student Undergraduate Research Fund (SURF) which allowed me to conduct dance research while photographing performances by TXST's Division of Dance members; I did not perform in any pieces nor take classes while in Guatemala. Rosas was joined by two dance majors from TXST—Olivia Barto and Eileene Vicencio—and supervised by two Division of Dance faculty members—Ana

Baer and Michelle Nance. They traveled to Guatemala City, Guatemala for five days of specific classes and performances. Initiation for this international travel was by chance and luck; Baer and Nance had been in close contact with Susana B. Williams, a passionate presenter of international dance. The 65<sup>th</sup> International Choreographer's Showcase is a creative outlet for choreographers and their dancers to interact with new audiences in new settings. The Showcase has been hosted in a number of countries including Spain, Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Monaco, and Montenegro along with the United States and Guatemala. Under Williams' direction and with the assembly help of her Dance-Forms Production team, the tedious nature of performing dance abroad becomes a welcomed venture with an elevated ease for everyone. This Showcase also specifically welcomes young talent from pre-professional dance majors. When approached to perform in the 65<sup>th</sup> Showcase, Baer and Nance turned to TXST's touring performance company, Merge Dance Company. The three dancers selected from Merge were eager, excited, and interested in travelling to Guatemala for dance opportunities. Guatemala is not a country notoriously attached to Western dance forms; only a few professional companies have performed in Guatemala City, such as Houston Ballet II in 2010. But Guatemala is not without an interest and desire for dance, and as proven before, where there is dance there are audience members. With two TXST Division of Dance scholarships, Rosas travelled to Guatemala City for a crash course in dance performance; this exchange was the shortest out of the three I provide. While in Guatemala City, the dancers interacted with students from the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala by taking their technique classes and, under the instruction of Baer and Nance, they in turn shared their Hawkins-based class principals from TXST's Division of

Dance. The formal dance performances took place at the Instituto Guatemalteco Americano (IGA) along with one informal performance at Williams' dance studio, Body Arts. After this quick-fire schedule of classes and performances, Rosas proudly informed, "There was a difference [in audience] because the audience at Texas State is filled with peers and faculty who are familiar with us, so they have the advantage at approaching us with ease." This new addition of unfamiliar, curious new audience members helped the performance atmosphere for the dancers, and, I argue, is one of the key elements that university dance programs/divisions need to focus on. A familiar audience can become disappointing for the dancers who seek newness with their performances, and the entire performance aesthetic becomes predictable as audience members buy their tickets, take their seats, view, and leave with little unique relations made with the dancers. International dance exchange allows for fresh perspectives, interactions, and situations for all dance participants. With all of these experiences, Rosas insightfully added:

I did not get to learn much about their history, but what I saw in some of the students and performers was passion just as I see it here at Texas State University's Dance Division. The love for the arts was evident for me. It is such a sweet thing to witness dance as being universal because you feel an instant connection with people... In the future I hope to contribute to dancers by giving scholarships to students. Dancers would get to network, learn and expand on their dancing by experiencing other cultures and styles of dance. (Rosas)

And it is with this personal participation of international dancer-audience exchange that the overall dancer-audience symbiosis thrives and proves that dance is not dead.

## **Conclusion**

### **The Life of Dance**

The “death threat” is a misnomer; any educated audience member of the arts can confirm the longevity and significance of art to humanity. With dance, many complex issues have occurred that are not part of other art forms, and as such, dance has been placed in a room of its own, often appearing silent and marginalized by the general public. Yet, with the help of various art forms and disciplines of study in academics and with professionals, dance has risen and continues to expand with time. The dancer-audience symbiosis demands that all levels of participants of dance react, realize, and remember dance performances with a true and open mind. I do not see any dance form—from ballet to salsa—dying in the future because of the perseverance of the dancer-audience symbiosis, connecting curious audience members and dedicated dancers.

In the twenty-first century the dance world has the potential to grow yearly at an extremely fast rate due to advances in technology that artists in the dance field can utilize for the good of their medium’s exploration. Dancers are currently using social media sites for promoting their companies, academies, programs/divisions, themselves, etc., which generates direct and personalized interactions and networks. Yet, with these connections of dance and technology, disconnections are still troubling the dance world. Online accessibility is becoming more obtainable to many developed communities of the world with the help of technological expansion from other initially able countries; however, many countries still deal with limited-to-no connectivity and lack all online tools for viewing and learning about dance. Reaching these limited-to-no connectivity countries presents a challenge, not only for the dance world, since it is impossible to connect to



audience members in limited-to-no connectivity countries without the help of various areas of art, science, and business. In this instance, live performances by international exchange are imperative to the dancers and audience members with limited-to-no connectivity. In order to endorse an updated, united dance community atmosphere across the globe that echoes the present and will mold to the future, the dance world needs to utilize online tools and online communities need to offer further connections between dance and technology. A tech-savvy fleet of dancers will help supplement live performance opportunities and advance dance in order to connect to current generations and accept future advancements.

One specific area which dance can expand with the times is in higher education. Dance programs/divisions which allow students to major, as well as minor, in dance and receive a B.F.A., M.F.A., or Ph.D. are much more common than a mere twenty years past. This quick expansion has become a truly wonderful addition to higher education primarily because of the addition of cross-departmental studies that utilize new technologies. The development of dance as a researchable and theorized area of study in higher education, for instance, is one past addition that helped maneuver dance into studies with technology. Thankfully, since dance in the modern era dealt with the first unions of professional and pre-professional dance to higher education institutions, many dance majors/minors and educators have continued to spread their research and development of dance into various new technologies within art, such as photographic and video experiments. What is often overlooked in the midst of so much collaboration is that dance can stand on its own in terms of research within higher education. In universities across America, the arts, like many areas of education, are not static. Attention to the

most up-to-date issues in art is imperative to the growth of a university, and having a strong and current fine arts and performing arts college are an even stronger coupes for all universities. For this thesis, I have based most of my research on major universities in Texas which successfully utilize current technology and international exchange for their dance programs/divisions. However, the situations and issues presented in these Texas universities are not limited to the region; they are national complications within the higher education system of the U.S. I cannot entertain the idea that a revolution of the entire higher education system in the U.S. will happen in the next decade, but I do maintain that with the help of active research and cooperation from all departments and divisions within universities, changes can happen on a smaller scale for the good of each discipline.

Reaching outwards beyond this country will help university dance programs/divisions reconstruct and adjust, instead of detach from the dancer-audience symbiosis. Specifically, some top universities in Texas, such as Texas State University, San Houston University, and University of Texas at Austin, are leading members of the national and internationally dance community by constantly improving their fine arts and performing arts programs with outreach and technology integration. These three universities also continue to deliver new studies for the world to build on while gathering general public and dance audience members who are interesting in joining with the university, the nation, and the global conversation about dance. Intensifying this exchange is important because when given the opportunity dance majors/minors and educators in universities will willingly exchange ideas with the international dance world while helping their regional communities improve. Expanding and supporting large

programs like the nationally recognized program American Dance Aboard, or from within a university dance program/division, will help dance majors/minors become their own sincere representatives by forming personal dancer-audience and dancer-dancer networks across the globe, coupled with the technologic networks created after the ephemeral performances have passed. Many countries expect Western dancers and audience members, in particular American dancers and audience members, to continue to grow and create with the people of the world just as much as they grow and create with the technologies of the times.

In an exciting recent announcement from the U.S. Department of State and the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), three dance companies have been selected to represent the United States in the fifth season of DanceMotion USA, “the dynamic cultural diplomacy program that supports United States foreign policy goals by engaging international audiences through educational opportunities, cultural exchange and performance” (“Troupes Selected”). Dance has been experienced by more than 100,000 participants in 48 countries, including over 40 million online viewers, with DanceMotion, and if national support for DanceMotion and BAM continue then the horizon for cultural exchange through dance is limitless (“Troupes Selected”). Yet, the belief that dance is still of importance for the United States is hard to state when occurrences such as this are rare. And as observed, many arts go through stages of extreme “boom” and “bust,” which may appear detrimental to the art form, but these stages only add to the proof that dance is alive and reacting with the times. In her dance research book about diplomacy and dancers, author Clare Croft states, “The investment in performance, however, gave the dancers hope that art, particularly dance, still counted as a public good— an idea that had

catalyzed the American dance boom of the 1960s and 1970s, when government funding helped American dance grow exponentially” (1). The United States will return to the dance “boom” it has experienced in waves since the start of the twentieth century. American investment in Westernized dance forms is newer than America is as a country, because Western dance forms did not even appear professionally until the end of the nineteenth century; yet, with cultural interest and exchange, America can note its rich history in many forms of ritual, social, and communal dance provided by its culturally diverse society, which include pre-professional and professional dancers. Croft also adds that “it is in the dancers’ movement between that ‘official’ identity and what lies beyond it that we see how the arts help us to recognize that national identity, especially American identity, is always in process” (9). With perspectives from various countries on the state of dance, instead of the limitations of one perspective, the dancer-audience symbiosis can be recognized in its entirety for all forms of dance by all audience members. On dance and the “death threat” in professional dance companies, Ted Brandsen, a member of the Dutch National Ballet, stated:

I think we are in a fresh phase now; people are excited about seeing new work and that work feels alive and vital and capable of absorbing the spirit of our times... It’s a language that is spoken by so many people, and, like all languages, is constantly transforming. (Sulcas)

It is with this global effort for authentic communication, in person or online, that the voice of dance sings out. The most of the dance world is thriving with technology and advancing with the current generation, as professional dance “companies now have Twitter accounts and Facebook pages, as do their dancers, whose lives are often on

display in ways that could not have been imagined a decade ago” (Sulcas). The live audience members and virtual audience members will continue to fluctuate in interest and size, as proven with the dance “booms” and “busts” throughout time. Abandoning one for the other is not a wise path for any arts community to take; therefore, engaging and interacting with both is the vital solution.

No two dancers are the same, just as no two audience members are the same. Three personal dance experiences abroad have been provided in this thesis, but those three experiences do not reflect everyone’s dance experience abroad; yet, the whole of dance metaphorically informs all dancers that they must carry dance in their hearts and share it with others. The experience of the audience can be described in three stages, as noted, but the overall grasp of dance is universal, pure, and powerful. As dancers continue to feed into top universities across the globe, or continue to create with curiosity as professionals, or teach others about the existing research and history of dance, the world of dance soars and reaches beyond borders to try and affect every individual. In the words of Judith Lynne Hanna from *The Performer-Audience Connection*, “The metaphor of dance links humanity to its history and vitality. To dance is an innate human propensity built into the psychic, bodily, and cultural potential of an individual” (24).

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