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ABSTRACT

This study was developed to explore the techniques of Merce Cunningham with elementary school children. It challenged the students' ability to understand and communicate the 'essence' of Merce Cunningham's distinctive use of collaboration, chance operations, movement style, and technology. This resulted in recognizing the significant contributions made by the Cunningham Foundation and Dance Company. Implications for research, teaching and education, and 'elevating' the aesthetic and movement possibilities in children's dance are discussed.
To My Family

Father, Theodore Unrau
Mother, C. Irene Unrau
Sister, Kimberly A. Unrau
Husband, Thomas S. Meade, Sr.
Son, Thomas S. Meade II
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VITA

September 26, 1964 ........................................................ Born – Detroit, Michigan
1986 ............................................................................... B.S., Wayne State University
........................................................................ Detroit, Michigan
1988 ............................................................................... M.A., The Ohio State University
........................................................................ Columbus, Ohio
1994 ............................................................................... C.M.A., Laban-Bartenieff Institute of
........................................................................ Movement Studies New York City,
........................................................................ New York

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Education

Studies in: Somatics, Dr. Seymour Kleinman
Laban Movement Analysis, Peter Madden, C.M.A.
Creativity? Dr. Philip Clark
Cunningham Dance Technique, Dr. Karen (Radford) Woods
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VII
CHAPTER 1
OVERVIEW

Introduction

This study was developed to explore the techniques of Merce Cunningham with elementary school children through dance education. This study explored the creative and technical growth of twenty-five elementary school children through the theories and technical practices developed by one of the most influential dancer/choreographers of the twentieth century, Merce Cunningham (b. 16 April 1919). The elementary school students in the project are a multi-ethnic, multi-racial group of children between the ages of eight and eleven, enrolled in the Columbus Public Schools in the city of Columbus, Ohio. The project proposed to examine the students' understanding and technical growth through the Cunningham dance theories and techniques.

Who is Merce Cunningham? Merce Cunningham, 80, is the originator of chance procedures (in dance composition). Chance procedures reflect a move away from an exclusive reliance on rigidly choreographed movements in a performance. Instead, certain elements of spontaneity and chance are built into the work. Having dancers throw large foam dice and then taking the number of jumps that appear on dice is an example of the introduction of chance. Consequently, no two performances would be the same. Cunningham is a second generation (following first generation pioneers Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Charles Weidman, Doris Humphrey and Martha Graham) modern dancer and choreographer.

The study further sought to investigate the integration and contribution of two areas of literature: the diverse literature addressing the creative work of Merce Cunningham
(bibliographic, video, computer technology, dance technique and repertory) and the Cunningham Dance Foundation and studio.

**Purpose of the Study**

The initial idea for this study was stimulated by a conversation with a dance professor in July of 1996. She had danced with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company for several years. We discussed the artistic and technical demands of children working in the Cunningham style. She did not believe children could successfully perform a piece in this technically demanding style. I disagreed. Though I did understand that a young dancer could not possibly perform excerpts from the company repertoire, I believed the children could successfully perform a phrase that someone would identify as ‘in the Cunningham style.’

What are the elements in this style? Does this style require extensive training? How far could young dancers go with such a challenge? Could they, ‘in-fact,’ perform a Cunningham “exercise” correctly?

Since my experiences teaching elementary school children dance suggested that they respond well to challenging material, I began to experiment by teaching my students the theory of Merce Cunningham’s dance as well as fundamental dance exercises and choreographic explorations in this style, in class. The children were eager to participate in the exercises and in choreographing the various sections of PLACE (1997) as well as dancing in them. The study’s work PLACE, is not to be confused with Cunningham’s work Place choreographed in the late 1960’s. The challenges of this dance style offered children the potential for creative expression, skill development, and an understanding of Cunningham’s techniques. Success with this project also offered a means of capturing the attention of children who might otherwise have little interest in the arts or might spend their time in less productive endeavors. The project was so engaging that four students who have graduated from the school and moved into the middle school have chosen to continue their participation in the project for a second year.
Work in this style led to a year long dance project in 1996-1997 which involved daily practice, adjustments and additions, and an initial version of the performance (twelve minutes) in November of 1996. A second lecture-demonstration public performance (twenty four minutes) was presented at The Third Avenue Performance Space (TAPS) in Columbus on Merce Cunningham's seventy-eighth birthday, April 16, 1997. Responses from the Ohio State University dance department faculty, parents, students and educators suggested the need to expand the project into the following school year.

The second year of the project began in September of 1997 with the involvement of The Ohio State University Department of Dance and added a new dimension to this work. Offering elementary school students a chance to collaborate with The Ohio State University dancers further challenged them and afforded opportunities for growth in technical skills. Through working with the dancers from the university, the students had numerous opportunities to observe 'good' dancers rehearsing, and performing movement in the style of Merce Cunningham. This element allowed for an incorporation of a mentoring aspect into the process and is expected to have a significantly long-range positive impact on the students and The Ohio State University dancers.

A final Ohio performance (fifty minutes) took place at Sullivant Theater on the campus of The Ohio State University, Tuesday, April 21st, 1998. The following evening the dancers traveled by motor-coach to New York City to perform at the Merce Cunningham Studio on Friday, April 24th and Saturday, April 25th, 1998.

The Sullivant Theater concert in Columbus began with a free pre-concert discussion led by lecturer, Candace Feck, in the Department of Dance at the Ohio State University. The pre-concert chat and performance was for the community and families of the performers. All ages were encouraged to attend the performance. There was a moderate admission fee for adults, and students. Complimentary tickets were available to professors, dance education students, and low income families.
Why a performance at the Merce Cunningham Studio? The most appropriate activity to bring this study to closure was a performance at the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio. The trip provided the students with community an in-depth cultural and historical experience of New York City and Merce Cunningham; and a greater understanding of the cultural importance of the arts.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions:

1. Can children comprehend and learn about Merce Cunningham?
2. Can children experience the techniques of Merce Cunningham in a meaningful and appropriate way?
3. Is it compatible with primary dance curriculum objectives?
4. What effect does this have on those involved in this project?

Rationale

I challenged myself to question expectations of what young children could successfully accomplish in the arts, in this case modern dance. I have always had high expectations and, this project demanded an unusually high technical level rarely, if ever, found in children's dance. With the children attaining this technical level I am hopeful that others will look at their approach to how dance and other similar disciplines are taught and perhaps know that there are new levels that many children would work hard to achieve.

The site for this study was a Columbus alternative elementary school where whole language and the arts are emphasized. The city itself is regarded as an extension of the school curriculum. The school has a long history of community involvement dating from the early 1900's. The present building, which opened in 1976, was designed to have free-flowing, open-space learning communities grouped around a central library. At the time of this study, the school had its own team of arts specialists who focus on music, dance/movement, and the visual/spatial arts.
**Definition of Terms**

The following list defines terms as they are used in this study:

A. **Chance Operations:**

A Cunningham technique. Cunningham often uses the method of coins, cards, or the *I Ching*, as a tool in determination of chance procedures.

B. **Choreography:**

The art of symbolically representing movement or dance. The composition and arrangement of movement and dance phrases.

C. **Collaboration:**

To work with others in an artistic endeavor resulting in a new and innovative work of art.

D. **Cunningham Technique:**

A highly physical modern dance and choreographic style. The technique possesses unique connections between the back and legs. A series of 'codified' back exercises facilitate the technique. A technique that explores the possibilities of human movement potential.

E. **Essence:**

The main idea communicated in and through the choreography.

F. **Events:**

A Cunningham choreographic technique that uses specific sections from past and present repertoire of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

G. **LifeForms™:**

A human movement animation software computer program.

H. **Somatics:**

Somatics is defined as, 'the body as experienced from within'. It is about wholeness and the rediscovery of the unity of body-mind and spirit. It is about the relationship between and among self and other, individual and group, inner and outer, public and private, and all the issues arising from these dynamic interactions.
I. Somatic Forms and Techniques:

Those forms and techniques that reflect wholeness and body, mind, and spirit integration such as Bartenieff Fundamentals®, Laban Movement Analysis, and yoga were used in this study.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations can be identified in one area, population studied. The information gained through this study will be generalizable to only a limited population, due to the composition of the students involved in this particular study. The twenty-five elementary students involved were enrolled in an alternative elementary school, which by the Columbus Board of Education definition is a school where parents' apply for admission for their children, and the children are selected through a lottery process based on these applications. The four middle school students are graduates of the alternative school and are currently attending three different middle schools in the district.

The seven Ohio State University dancers were selected specifically for their performance and technical abilities. Three dancers had prior Cunningham dance technique experience. The elementary school for the study was chosen because at the time of this study, I was the dance educator at the school. Scheduling and classroom organization necessitated that only third, fourth and fifth graders be included in the project. The Ohio State dancers were individuals I knew and had danced and performed with at the university.

Organization of Remainder of Study

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature. Chapter 3 discusses the experiencing and understanding of Cunningham, presents the data collection process and relevance of the data. Chapter 4 presents the methodology. Chapter 5 contains the results and conclusion.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature pertinent to this study. Beginning with the use of chance operations alongside John Cage in the late 1940's, Merce Cunningham today continues to fracture every rule while substituting his own systems and credos about the very nature of how dance is created and performed. Cunningham has created over one hundred dance works, and for the last fifty years has always been considered 'of the moment.' The cornerstones that influenced this study are divided into six sections and are identified, described and reviewed.

Six Developments that Lead Cunningham to Large Discoveries

Six significant developments lead Merce Cunningham to large discoveries in his artistic work. The first and most significant development was his collaborative work with composer and musician, John Cage (b.1912 - d.1992). The second development is Cunningham's use of chance operations. The third development is Cunningham codified dance technique. The fourth development is Cunningham's Events. The fifth development was collaborative work with Dr. Tom Calvert LifeForms™ in Trackers (1991) and the current collaboration with Paul Kaiser with Motion Capture in BIPED (1999).

Cunningham's six significant developments were applied at various levels in this study. Adrian Hatfield, a painter, with the students at Douglas Alternative Elementary School, created large back clothes for PLACE (1998). Done in the style of Jackson Pollock's 'action painting,' the scenery reflected working in this style. The musical score for PLACE
PLACE (1998) used chance operations and was performed as an Event. There were sixty-four sections in the work that varied in length, idea, and number of dancers. The movement was a accumulation of choreography created by the students, choreography I created, tableaux work from stills of various Cunningham's dance works, LifeForms™, and randomly ordered movements (hop, skip, jump, turn and others) created through chance operations. Various chance operation tools were utilized in the piece: dice, cards, and small pieces of paper drawn from a mixed up pile. An emphasis on the elements of the Cunningham dance technique and children's dance was challenging. I did not expect the children to exhibit the technical degree of Cunningham's dancers. I wished to explore the techniques of his aesthetic foundations (the use of time and space, clarity of movement intent and intention) in Cunningham's work with the students.

An excellent teaching tool in this study was the use of videotapes. One of Cunningham's superb contributions is the documentation of his dances, specifically choreographed for the camera, on video. By sharing Cunningham's life and work on video such as Event for Television (1976), Torse (1976), Changing Steps (1978), Pictures (1984), Points in Space (1986), Cage/Cunningham (1991), Beach Birds for Camera (1992), and CRWDSPCR (1993), we had in hand, a view into Cunningham's world. In observing the videos, I examined Cunningham's choreographic form, creative process, and use of chance procedures. In addition, I examined through Laban Movement Analysis, Cunningham's movement preferences in his choreography, which is done most efficiently by repetitive observation. The literature review for this study provided a framework for exploring Cunningham's techniques.

Collaborations with John Cage and others

John Cage, born in Los Angeles in 1912, had studied with Richard Buhlig, Adolph Weiss, Henry Cowell, and Arnold Schoenberg. He already had radical notions about music.
During a residency at the Cornish School, John Cage substitute taught for two weeks in dance composition. Cunningham says, this time was “a revelation-suddenly there was something very precise and very strict to work with. He simply made us make things- you had to think about it, not just have some feeling about what you were going to do next, but think about it, and that was an extraordinary experience.” (David Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*, p. 17) Cage himself would say of these classes that he was trying to arrive at “A way in which dance and the music could be composed at the same time rather than one waiting for the other to be finished or before you fitted the music to the dance or fitted the dance to the music. So I was teaching the dancers to compose, using percussion instruments.” (David Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*, p. 17) Cage sought other forms of musical composition. What interested him most was rhythmic development, rhythm defined as the relationships of sounds and silences.

In 1939, an article by Cage, “Goal: New Music, New Dance” appeared as part of a series called “Percussion Music and Its Relation to the Modern Dance” in Horst’s magazine *Dance Observer*. The text began, “Percussion music is revolution. Sound and rhythm have too long been submissive to the restrictions of the nineteenth-century music. Today we are fighting for their emancipation. Tomorrow, with electronic music in our ears, we will hear freedom.” Cage wrote of the idea, which he was then preoccupied, “the simultaneous composition of both dance and music,” concluding, “The form of the music-dance composition should be a necessary working together of all materials used. The music will then be more than accompaniment; it will be an integral part of the dance.” (John Cage, “Goal: New Music, New Dance,” *Dance Observer*, December 1939, pp. 296-97. Reprinted in John Cage’s, *Silence* pp. 87-88).

Cunningham’s first dance choreographies premiered in January of 1939. His first works are entitled *Unbalanced March*, a solo, and *Jazz Epigram*, a duet choreographed and danced with Dorothy Herrmann. In Cunningham’s recollection, the music for these dances (by Paul Hindemith and Ernst Toch) came from a collection of modern piano pieces that Cage
would play for the class, from which students would choose something to use for their studies. (David Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*, p. 19)

A development occurred in the summer of 1939. While studying dance at the Bennington School of the Dance at Mills College, Cunningham studied dance technique with Martha Graham. Martha immediately offered Merce a position in her dance company in 1939. Speaking of this time many years later, Cunningham said: "She was such an amazing person, Martha, to watch—she was so very beautiful and the lady could dance, no question about that." After Graham's death, in 1991, Cunningham said,

"Martha Graham was an extraordinary dancer. She was making a form of theater that was original and distinctly American. Thinking back on my first years in New York, I realized now, as I did then, how fortunate it was for me to be on the same stage with her. She was small in stature but large in presence. Dancing with her, I had no impression of the difference between our heights. Those few years working with her and being in her company provided an experience of the dance that was not available elsewhere then. I have always been grateful for it." (Joseph Mazo, "Martha remembered," *Dance Magazine*, LXV, no. 7 (July 1991): 42.

*Summerspace* (1958) is a striking example of Cunningham’s collaborative method, in which the artists [choreographer, visual artist, and composer] work independently rather than in close consultation, yet each creative element makes a potent contribution to the whole. "(Morton) Feldman was once asked how we could do this, how we could work without knowing what the other was doing," Cunningham said. "It’s like this," he said. "Say you’re getting married and I tell you the dress won’t be made until the morning of the wedding. But I also tell you it is a (Christine) Dior." (Nora Ephron, "3 Characters in Search of a Ballet, or the Genesis of “Summerspace,”" *New York Times* (Paris) 14 June 1964) Unlike the music and visual art collaborators, Cunningham requires the costume designers (or simply implies) that the full shape of the dancers’ figures be clearly shown. (Robert Greskovic, "Merce Cunningham as Sculpture," *Ballet Review*, spring 1984)

Speaking to Robert Rauschenberg, Cunningham stated, "One thing I can tell you about this dance, *Summerspace* (1958), is it has no center." (Marilyn Vaughan Drown, "Merce Cunningham and Meaning: The Zen Connection," in *Merce Cunningham: Creative Elements*, Vol. 4, No. 3, p.17) Billed as Cunningham's first major collaboration with a visual artist, in
this case Robert Rauschenberg, and Feldman’s score produced the effect of a hot, still summer afternoon. Rauschenberg’s response was to paint an abstract, pointillist back cloth (executed with the assistance of Jasper Johns, using Day-Glo spray paint and a stencil) that, like a Jackson Pollock painting, might be taken as an arbitrary segment of something that could in theory be executed into infinity. For Cage, the effect was, “as though one were looking out the window of a moving train [at] a landscape of dance, knowing that the dance never stops and that the one always sees only a small part of it.” (John Cage, manuscript notes, n.d.)

Rune (1959) [Autumn Runes, Sound of Autumn] is another choreographic piece monumental in Cunningham’s development as a choreographer.

“The dance was made in a series of chunks of movement, some chunks involving the whole company (six dancers), and others as little as one or two. These chunks varied in length, but as first arranged added up to five-minute sections, five in all, the whole being twenty-five minutes. All the sections were to be done at any performance, but the order they were done could be shifted. These changes produced certain problems of arrangement.” (David Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*, p. 117)

Cunningham states, “In the first order I finished here and then triplet off stage. But with this new order, I am supposed to begin the next phrase over there. How do I get there? You must use the triplets that previously got you off stage to now get you over there.” Or, more complex, a borrowing scheme came into the order: “You use the sliding movement used in the first section of the first order to exit with, and here you use it to enter with for this new section.” This is explained cumbersomely, but what became clear in reordering is that I didn’t have to make new movement, we could live off the interest of the first order, using motions in different places, where something was not necessary for exiting or entering or changing place it could be used later. The dance is technically difficult to do, as it is full of complicated steps, and sudden changes of tempo, abruptly, and without premeditation, but in full arc of possibilities.” (Jack Anderson, “Merce Cunningham and Dance Co., Brooklyn Academy of Music- April 15, 16, and 18, 1969,” *Dance Magazine* XLIII no. 6 (June 1969): 34.

Rune (1959) is one of the most rigorous of Cunningham’s dances to date, uncompromising, and in the current repertoire for the company. There is a deliberate use of stillness, as an element of equal value, to that of movement (as in John Cage’s use of silence). Rune was one of Cunningham’s first dances to use the stage space in a layered way— the eye simultaneously takes in events in the foreground, middle, and rear of the stage, and these, while not necessarily related, do interact. Cunningham and the dancers had descriptive names for the phrases [and sections], more for quick identification in rehearsal than to indicate specific content. Rune (1959) was the only Cunningham dance of this period to be
notated fully by Cunningham (in his own notation, consisting of written phrases and stick figures) (David Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*, p. 118).

In 1963, Cunningham began to include a general note on his philosophy of collaboration, point of view, and meaning in the company's programs:

"Dancing has a continuity of its own that need not be dependent upon either the rise and fall of sound (music) or the pitch and cry of words (literary ideas). Its force of feeling lies in the physical image, fleeting, or static. It can and does evoke all sorts of individual responses in the single spectator. These dances may be seen in this light. The music and dance co-exist as individual but interpenetrating happenings, jointly experienced in the length of time they take up and divide." (This note first appeared in the house program of the Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, Ark., 23-24 October 1963)

**Chance Operations**

In 1944, after numerous dance experiences with Martha Graham, John Cage relocated to New York City and encouraged Merce Cunningham to create his own dance works. On April 5, 1944 Merce Cunningham and John Cage gave their first joint concert at the Humphrey-Weidman Studio Theatre on West 16th Street. Cunningham has written, "I date my beginning from this concert." (Merce Cunningham, *Changes: Notes on Choreography*, n.p.) When Cunningham in his first concert separated movement from its dependence on narrative development, he opened his horizons to an area of choreography based on dance logic that flowed from the basic characteristics of dance instead of placing dance energy at the service of an 'outside' non-dance element.

The concert consisted of six solos choreographed and performed by Cunningham and three pieces of music composed and performed by John Cage. Cage also composed music for the Cunningham solos. The overviews of the individual pieces in David Vaughan's *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*, appear to demonstrate Merce's narrative and story lines in each of the works, possibly a carry-over from his experiences with Martha Graham. Choreographic structure was conventional (theme and variation, ABA); chance procedures (undermining the organizing principles of artistic intention) were still to come in Cunningham's work. Cage and Cunningham did experiment with the music and dance happening or sharing a common space
and time.' Though the choreographic structures were conventional, the use of the music was innovative. Cage stated that with *Root of an Unfocused* (1944) progress was made toward permitting two arts collaborate without following one another. *Root of an Unfocused* (1944) remained in the Cunningham/Cage repertoire approximately ten years.

Cunningham said, "The use of the time structure allowed us to work separately, Cage not having to be with the dance except at structural points, and I was free to make the phrases and movements within the phrases vary their speeds and accents without reference to a musical beat, again only using the structural points as identification between us. Each of the five dances made this way had a different time structure and length which came out of my initial working with the movement for the particular dance." (Merce Cunningham, *Changes: Notes on Choreography*, n.p.)

In 1948, Cunningham and Cage were invited to speak at the National Inter-Collegiate Arts Conference, at Vassar College, in New York, its subject being "The Creative Arts in Contemporary Society." Cunningham, on a panel, defined dance as "organized movement in time and space." A Vassar publication continued, "Mr. Cunningham held that there is really no such thing as 'abstract' dancing, since the dance itself consists of the movements of the human body, which can never be abstract." He also spoke of a new relationship between choreographer and composer- "a cooperative interdependency."

In the question period that followed, Cunningham was asked, "whether or not it was necessary for the dancer (choreographer) to have a definite idea before he started to compose. Mr. Cunningham replied that a dance could be conceived in two ways: (1) the choreographer might have an idea which, in the process of the composition, was shaped and translated by dance form, or, (2) he might start out with a simple step or pattern... which would acquire meaning as the basic pattern was developed." (E.K. [Ellen Kraft], "[Irwin] Shaw and Cunningham Analyze Isolation of Drama and Dance," *Vassar Miscellany News*, 32 no. 18, (3 March 1948): 5. Another account stated that Cunningham "feels that the meaning of a dance is in the doing and that it is a reflection of human behavior in dance form, and because of this, it
is [in] no way an abstract art.” (“Cunningham,” Vassar Chronicle, 6 March 1948. This is the first occasion elements of Cunningham's developing aesthetic were stated in public and printed.)

It was the summer of 1948, the duo taught at Black Mountain College, created and performed works for the students. It proved to be a place where the two further developed their aesthetic and created collaborative works. Coincidentally, The I Ching: Book of Changes would be published (in English) the following year in 1949.

“The work of Cunningham and Cage was often described as, or accused of, being Dadaist in nature; certainly both men increasingly rejected received ideas about music and dance, and expressed their own notions in their statements and in their works. They were, of course, much influenced by the ideas- not to mention the life and work - of Marcel Duchamp, whose art is often associated with Dada. As early as 1944, Cage had contributed a graphic design called Chess Pieces, made up of squares of musical notation, to an exhibition of works related to Duchamp’s interest in chess, at the Julien Levy Gallery, New York.” (Richard Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage, plate 17)

During the late 1940's Cage studied Indian music and philosophy with Gita Sarabhai, in exchange for lessons with Cage in contemporary music and counterpoint, (John Cage, Silence, p. 127), and attended lectures on Zen Buddhism given at Columbia University by Dr. Daisetz T. Suzuki. These studies profoundly influence his ideas concerning musical composition.

In 1970 Suzuki writes...“the relationship rises from an appreciation of the significance of life - or we may see the mysteries of life enter deeply into the composition of art. When an art, therefore, presents those mysteries in a profound and creative manner, it moves us to the depths of our being; art then becomes a divine work.” (Marilyn Vaughan Drown, “Merce Cunningham and Meaning: The Zen Connection,” in Merce Cunningham: Creative Elements, Vol. 4, No. 3, p.21) Cunningham attended many of these lectures with Cage, and his ideas about choreographic structure were increasingly influenced by these eastern philosophies.

In the early 1950's, Cage began to use chance operations in his musical compositions. A new work, Sixteen Dances for Soloist and Company of Three (1951, a fifty-three minute evening-length work), was Cunningham's first exploration with chance procedures in a
choreographic-compositional process. The composer Christian Wolff introduced Cage to the / Ching or Book of Changes, which had just been published by his parents company Pantheon Books. *(The / Ching or Book of Changes, the Richard Wilhelm translation rendered into English by Cary F. Baynes, with the foreword by C. J. Jung, New York: Pantheon Books, Bollingden Series XIX, 1950)* An excerpt from the foreword reads, “Synchronicity takes the coincidence of events in space and time as meaning something more than mere chance, namely, a peculiar interdependence of objective events among themselves as well as with the subjective (psychic) states of the observer or observers.”

As soon as Cage saw the charts used for identifying the names of the hexagrams, he made the connection with his own charts, and saw that he could use the book as the basis for the chance operations toward which he had been moving. In the music, John Cage started with a specific set of sixty-four sounds for the first dance, and for each pair of dances replaced eight sounds with eight others, until at the end there was a completely new set of sounds. Cunningham said of his first chance experience, “It was the first time where you encountered a coordination, going from one thing to another, that I had not encountered before, physically—so how do you do it, if you’re going to accept this idea at all, how do you manage it? You have to just fight with it, and struggle, and try to find the most direct way to go from one of these things to the other.” *(David Vaughan, Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years, p. 63)*

Cunningham’s dances and Cage’s music had more in common with the art of this period than with other dance choreographies and musical compositions. The Abstract Expressionist school that emerged during the 1940’s (Marcel Duchamp, Hans Arp, Max Ernest, and Kurt Schwitters, Jackson Pollock) gave first to the importance to the actual process of painting, the ‘action’ or ‘gesture’ of the painter in applying the paint— as in Jackson Pollock’s method of allowing paint to drip over the canvas. As Meyer Schapiro wrote, in “endless tangles and irregular curves, self-involved lines which impress us as possessing the qualities not so much of things as of impulses, of excited movements emerging and changing before our eyes.” *(Meyer Schapiro, Modern Art/19th & 20th Centuries/Selected Papers, New York: George Braziller, 1978, p. 219).*
In 1955, Cunningham writes, "the feeling I have when I compose in this way [by chance] is that I am in touch with natural resources far greater than my own personal inventiveness could ever be, much more universally human than the particular habits of my own practice, and organically rising out of the common pools of motor impulses." (Marilyn Vaughan Drown, "Merce Cunningham and Meaning: The Zen Connection," in *Merce Cunningham: Creative Elements*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1997, p. 21) This celebration of multiplicity seems to expand time and space, as well as consciousness.

For *Suite by Chance* (1953), Cunningham prepared a series of dance movement charts (which defined the physical limits within which the continuity would take place) for several months. He tossed coins to determine which of the movements were to be strung together to create the choreographic sequence of movements in the dance. Once the charts were prepared, the chance methodology of composition was not difficult for Cunningham, since he had used this choreographic device with his students in dance composition classes. In *Suite by Chance* (1953), significant points in the music would serve as cues for the number of dancers to be onstage, exits and entrances, unison or individual movements. Significant points were decided by tossed coins. (Remy Charlip, "Concerning Merce Cunningham and his choreography: Composing by Chance," *Dance*, January 1954, p. 19)

*Suite By Chance* (1953), is a fundamental exploration of chance procedures. Chance is not chaos as Cunningham would be the first to acknowledge. There is often too much going on to watch it (an ensemble chance dance) all at once; spectators naturally look for order. A cue sheet reproduced in Cunningham's 1968 book *Changes: Notes on Choreography* clearly shows, however, that the dancers took cues from easily recognizable places in the music in *Suite By Chance*.

Chance operations as used by Cunningham as a tool for composition directs attention in a matter that it would not have followed 'easily' on its own choice. In most of Cunningham's early works, chance operations ordered sections of the dance, rather than assembled the
movement steps and phrases (found in later works). Early chance works often had multiple sections or suites of movement.

Later works (beginning in the 1960's), use chance operations to assemble movement combinations. (Especially with the addition in of LifeForms™ in 1991 and Motion Capture in 1999. The choices Cunningham makes regarding the way his dances are choreographed and the way they are presented are important aspects of knowing in his work. These are two essential elements of his dances that lead to a particular experience for the dancer, the viewer, or theorist, who attempt to interpret his work.

The use of chance operations (the use of dice, coins, sticks, cards, I Ching) as a means of composition is an essential element of Cunningham's techniques. Chance operations involve randomly selecting, by various means, the elements of each dance. Another element is his 'collaborations' with artists, designers, and composers- most notably John Cage. Collaboration has its own meaning for Cunningham, as he readily explains. "In performance, dance and music and design 'exist in the same space and take up the same amount of time, but from different points of view." (Christopher Cook, "Forms of Life," Dance Now, summer 1997, p. 64)

Suite by Chance (1953) was Cunningham's first attempt to experiment with 'open-field' [no common front, all points in the performance area were equally important] choreography, meaning the audience could and was encouraged to sit around the dancers. This concept was stimulated by an Albert Einstein passage that Cunningham read addressing points in space,

"...And then I read Einstein by pure coincidence, where he said there are no fixed points in space and I thought, well, that's perfect, that, as far as I was concerned, was about stage space. There aren't any fixed points. Wherever you are...could be the center. Well that's a Buddhist thought, of course - wherever you are is the center, as well as where everybody else is. But that seemed to me to be quite marvelous, and enlarging." (Cunningham Dance Foundation Website, 1997)

The first entity a viewer is made conscious of watching a Cunningham concert is the lack of central focus in the choreographic patterns. Unlike ballet, which is rigidly structured about a central position on the stage, with the lesser members of the company such as the corps
about a central position on the stage, with the lesser members of the company such as the corps de ballet spaced around the periphery, Cunningham assigns no such performing priority to the stage area. The dancers position on stage is not what determines this factor but rather the inherent interest of the choreography, as determined by the observer.

Cunningham has renegotiated the space in which dance itself takes place; perhaps, making him one of the most revolutionary modern choreographers. In 1968, Carolyn Brown (company member from 1952-1972) made an important statement regarding the use of chance procedures and Cunningham's choreographic use of space and time in, *Solo Suite in Space and Time* (1953),

"Solo Suite in Space and Time ... is what might be considered "Cunningham classical." It is not without dramatic intensity. But the form, the movement is space and time, is like pure water: clear, transparent, and reflective. Merce begins his deep involvement with time and space with this solo..." (Carolyn Brown, untitled essay, Dance Perspectives, no. 34 (issue titled, *Time to Walk in Space*, summer 1968): 30.

In addition to dances rooted through the *I Ching*, Cunningham used playing cards to randomly order movement. In *Canfield* (1969), he assigned a word indicating a kind of motion (e.g. jump, kneel, perch, slide) to each card on the deck. The red and black suits denoted fast and slow movements. "When two or three face cards came up in succession, they referred to the possibility of duets and trios." (Merce Cunningham quoted in Jacqueline Lesschaeve's, *The Dancer and the Dance*, p. 115)

There were fifty-two possible movement indications, and each time Cunningham played the game these came up in a different order. Since there are thirteen cards in a suit, he made thirteen strictly formal dances or "hands." He also made fourteen "deals" -twelve between the "hands" plus one to begin and another to end the dance. These deals compromised simpler movements, in the performance of which the dancers were given certain freedoms- to do them or not, for instance, or to drop out for part of them. The order was changed at each performance, and was posted in the wings for the dancers to read. A complete performance of all twenty-seven "hands" and deals would last seventy-five minutes, and were given under occasion, under the title, "Theater Event."
Actual chance operations can be varied. And Merce often said to Chris Komar
(company member from 1972 – 1996, assistant artistic director and company dancer until his
death in 1996), “This is one way that I do it. But you might find a different way to use it - a
different kind.” Komar went on to state,

“But the idea - and this also comes from John Cage - about using chance was to be
unintentional. To get the ego away from what you were doing and not to have a specific intent
about some specific result. And that’s a sort of discovery. An adventure finding out something
you don’t already know rather than repeating what you do know. I think it is a philosophical
base, a way of thinking about your work and your life and the world, really. Chance,
randomness, uncertainty is a part of the way nature’s process works. Their idea was that’s the
way they (Cunningham and Cage) wanted to think about their work. And I think their lives,
too.” (Susan Kraft, “Komar on Merce, Cage, Chance, Movement and Possibilities,” Contact
Quarterly, winter/spring 1997, pp. 39-40)

In the Sixes (Fielding Sixes, 1980) sixty-four phrases were all in six and all at the
same tempo - rapid. The phrases only varied in terms of movement and accent. Repetition was
allowed. Chance operations gave the continuity, space to be used, and number of dancers to
appear at any moment. Many of the phrases involved leaping, rapid crossing of the stage
space and sudden reversals of direction. (Merce Cunningham, quoted in Jacqueline Lesschaeve,
The Dancer and the Dance, p. 156)

Doubles (1984) was constructed according to a complex chance procedure. The first solo,
for a woman (Susan Quinn-Young), was made according to a square root system, with seventeen
phrases of seventeen counts each. Chance determined on which of the counts the dancer would
move in space, move her arms, her torso, everything. Cunningham said, “Doubles (1984) is
based on rhythm, on time more than space, although space enters into it, too. Rhythmic
phrases were organized by chance. Say the numbers come up to be 2, 7, and 5. The phrase
consists of a short movement in 2 counts, and movements in 7 and 5 counts.” (Merce Cunningham,
quoted in Andrea Grodsky Huber, “Merce Cunningham Brings ‘Unpremeditated Creation’ to
Dance,” Baltimore Sun, 24 March 1995) Doubles (1984) was different from other dances. There
were two casts and two different versions of the same piece. The two casts learned the dance
separately; the chance process came out slightly different for each cast. The two versions
were performed simultaneously at an open rehearsal in the dance studio at the Westbeth. They started and finished together, but there were many differences.

*Pictures* (1984) was choreographed for the full company. As choreographic material, Cunningham had made drawings of stick figures in poses (pictures or tableaux's), varying from two to five people. There were sixty-four poses, plus an equal number of kinds of movement that could be used to get from one to another. The poses were not static on stage: “Even when we are still we are moving, we are not waiting for something, we are in action when we are still.” (Merce Cunningham, 1985). The sequence of the tableaux’s and the transitional movements were determined by chance. The use of “negative space” in Cunningham’s sculptural groupings has always been an important element of his choreography. In *Pictures* (1984), it became nearly the subject of the piece. In *Pictures* (1984), a silence was the choreography itself, and groups of people forming tableaux. Some dances remained in their figures for over two minutes; an average length for a figure was five seconds. The piece was often performed with the cycl lit up, allowing the audience to experience silhouettes of the dancers.

In 1988, Cunningham further defined his use of chance operations and his work by stating, “You carefully set up- or I do. I have to set up what I am going to cast from: what kind of material for each dance, something about the time, and something about the space. Then, through the chance means that movement is how long it takes and where it is. I use it [chance] in many different ways, it is not some kind of strict method, by any means, but chance is in every piece in some way. The idea of personality not being there isn't true simply because when the dancers do it, they - in doing it - take it on. It's like a second skin.” (Nancy Vreeland Dalva, “The I Ching and Me: A Conversation with Merce Cunningham, Dance Magazine, March 1988, p.61) In 1988, Cunningham first wanted to surprise himself and then share his discoveries made during what remains, after fifty-plus years of dance making, an unconventional creative process. (Hutera, “Merce et moi,” Dance Now, spring, 1998, p. 9)
Polarity (1990) not only refers to the separation of two poles but also to their attraction. There were, then, two distinct types of movement in the piece static, and active. For the static movement, Cunningham divided the body into its different parts and noted the ways each part could move. He used chance procedures to determine which part of the body would be moving at any given moment. In many ways, he was returning to the chance procedures he used in his earliest chance solo, Untitled Solo, of 1953. This work was double cast and as in Doubles (1984) presented subtle alternatives. Though the choreography was set, movements changed from dancer to dancer.

Enter (1992) was the dance Cunningham was working on at the time of John Cage's death. John Cage died on August 12, 1992, after suffering a stroke at the Sixth Avenue apartment that he and Cunningham shared. Apart from the fact that Cunningham and his dancers were mourning Cage's loss, this was a period of turmoil in the company, marked by deep divisions between the dancers and the administration — a situation that was not to be resolved for another year. "In Enter (1992) there are plenty of moments that are full of possibilities about people, human beings." (Nancy Reynolds, "A Conversation with Alan Good (company dancer from 1978—1994)," Ballet Review, fall 1996, p. 22)

"The structure of the dance, Enter, is based on a series of numbers, one through fifteen. The order in which they occur was arrived at by the use of chance operations. One through fifteen refers to the number of dancers in Enter, with the addition of one extra, myself. Also, one of the numbers, twelve, was divided again, using chance operations, into one through twelve subdivisions as an added possibility. The duration of each section, and the division and entrances and exits of the dancers in any given section, have been chance derived. The dance, Enter, is concerned with humans involved in different experiences of movement." (Merce Cunningham, original version of a note published in French translation in the program of the Opera de Paris Garnier, 17/21 November 1992)

Cunningham himself had two solo entrances during the dance. The three static positions he took at different points on the stage in the first entrance were held for lengths of time corresponded to the three 'movements' of Cage's 4'33". Time is determined by how long a specific movement takes, to change the time is to change the movement. Many-viewed Enter as a dance about death, but the final leaping section suggested otherwise. Cunningham himself admitted "I miss talking with Cage, not necessarily about dance, but about so many
things, because he always had a fresh way of seeing things. The work has not been affected by Cage’s death.” (Merce Cunningham, quoted in Janice Berman, “Cunningham Hurdles Forward,” New York Newsday, March 9, 1993)

Alan Good states, “Enter is pretty monumental. It’s just not the kind of piece one would take lightly from the inside or the outside. There’s a much-photographed moment in there that’s pretty still. A duet is going on, and I’m lying in a sacrificial pose, gesturing upward. There was a huge thunderstorm the day he was working on that section. The weather up at Westbeth can get sufficiently strong that sometimes we rush to the windows and close them down. There was a thunderstorm, not quite hail but pretty violent. He was working on this thing, with thunder and lightning around us, and later on, we found out that it was that hour that John had fallen with the stroke. It’s one of the most visually powerful moments in the piece. With all that happening around us the dance had yet to develop, and I think he’s still watching the way it develops, with the knowledge that his whole history had changed as of that day. Halfway through the piece you definitely got the feeling that all bets were off, that he was telling something important. We all worried that he would not make it, and by make it, I mean survive.” (Nancy Reynolds, “A Conversation with Alan Good,” Ballet Review, fall 1996, p. 25)

CRWDSPCR (1993) was first performed at the American College Dance festival in Durham, North Carolina. CRWDSPCR is a work for thirteen dancers, of twenty-seven minutes in length. Merce Cunningham has written, “The use of LifeForms*, the dance computer, brought about the title. Computer technology is changing our language, condensing words. From its original form, Crowdspacer, I have used two variants, Crowd Space/Crowds Pacer. The music performed at the premiere by the composer [John King], with John D.S. Adams and Takehisa Kosugi, is produced through transformations of the sounds of the steel Dobro slide guitar.” (Merce Cunningham, World Wide Web, Repertory: Notes, p. 2-3)

Ocean, an evening length work (1994), was a landmark piece for Cunningham. The piece is in nineteen sections, with fifteen dancers. The “sea-like” electronic score, John Cage’s last (finished by a colleague) due to his death, is played by 112 musicians surrounding the stage. There is no conductor. In principle, Cunningham utilized the process based on the number of hexagrams in the I Ching, using 64 phrases as the source of movement, due to the length of the dance; Cunningham doubled it to 128 phrases. The choreography was created and performed in the round, initially frightening for Cunningham. “It is amazing to be working in the round, in reference to the space, it brings up Einstein’s work about curving space - we tend to
think flat. I use chance operations to determine where they face at each moment in the phrase. Difficult but fascinating.” (Merce Cunningham program, City Center Theater, New York, 8-20 March 1994)

In Ocean (1994), the epic ninety-minute dance, the arms are crucial to the way we look at the dance. In the choreographic process Cunningham stated, ‘as long as a movement is completely done physically, it can be viewed from any angle. It’s like looking at an animal, you don’t think any one part is necessarily better than any other to look at. Though ballet is different, ballet is made to be seen frontally. That’s why Petita always repeated those phrases three times coming forward, with the dancers running to the back and starting again. It fitted the focus of the proscenium stage. Petita was a very bright man.’ (Judith Mackrell, “The Variety is Endless,” in Dance Now, spring 1998, p.6) Cunningham offers us the views we would get if we were able to see the dance ‘in the round.

The Cunningham Dance Technique

The most efficient way to present Cunningham’s dance technique is through statements on his technique and his demonstration of the technique through specific choreographic works. A great deal of what happens in the dance technique class finds its way to the stage as a Cunningham piece. This is true with the early works of the 1950’s and 1960’s, as well as the 1970’s and 1980’s. Cunningham’s work changed profoundly in 1991 with his use of the human movement animation program, LifeForms™. His work, BIPED, in 1999 with Motion Capture, integrates the use of LifeForms™ and large multi-media image projections in the performance space.

In 1959, Merce Cunningham made the first public statement regarding his evolving dance technique. This statement provides an idea to what his movement vocabulary was at that time. Cunningham stated, “The dancer begins with physical awareness and balance. In the daily class, which he soon begins to love and hate, he learns the eight basic movements, with variations: bending, rising, extending, turning, sliding, skimming and brushing, jumping
and falling.” (Lynn Ludlow, “Dance, Music Parting Ways: Independent Existence Cited by Cunningham,” Champaign-Urbana Courier, 4 March 1959: p.10) “My dance classes were open to anybody, my only stipulation was that they had to come to the class everyday, in other words, for that, and that they were willing to do that, that was fine.” (Merce Cunningham, as quoted in WNET interview, n.d.)

Walkaround Time (1968) was divided into seven sections, each about seven minutes long. The opening section consisted of various movements taken from the warm-up exercises in a Cunningham technique class - a form of choreographic “ready-made.” Carolyn Brown, dancer for the Cunningham Dance Company from its inception in 1953 until 1972, embodied this unique movement style. In the film version of Walkaround Time, she combines fluidity with control, demonstrating amazing virtuosity in her balance and concentration.

Torse (1976) uses the numbers one to sixty-four, taken from the I Ching: The Book of Changes. These numbers are used both in the spatial plan, conceived as a square eight by eight, and the movement phrases, which constitute the language of Torse (1976). All aspects of the continuity were chance-determined, the sequence of phrases, and the number of dancers involved in a given phrase. The rhythm is sometimes metric and sometimes not. As in Rubus (an ensemble unison piece) of 1975, Torse (1976) (in two-part counterpoint unison) is about sophisticated rhythms and subtle variations. The phrases have a logic of their own and occur one after the other. Both Rubus (1975) and Torse (1976) are formalistic and incorporate exercises from the daily Cunningham technique class.

Alan Good (company member from 1978–1994) states the following, “Torse (1976) was a notorious piece because it was just so heroic and hard to get through and long. If you were foolish enough to attempt to go through the whole thing straight through, then it was definitely to be an experience by itself. An opinion with reference to Torse (1976) was it represented for past generations of Cunningham dancers or Cunningham lovers a sad turn in the repertory toward sterility, dryness, a leaching away of unit contract.” (Nancy Reynolds, “A Conversation with Alan Good,” Ballet Review, fall 1996, p. 22.)
The 1970's Cunningham technique, as seen in *Torse* (1976), addresses change of direction, tilts, curves and twists of the back against the working leg, balances in hard-to-hold positions and releves, leaps, and a great deal of allegro (very fast) footwork. Although there are elements of non-dance movement to be found in his work, it is nearly impossible to imagine Cunningham working with a group of dancers who did not have a high level of modern dance or balletic training. They simply would not be able to perform his choreography without it. In all of his works, the dancers have the alert, poised, and ready-to-go-in-any-direction look that is characteristics of the Cunningham dancer. They are lean and bird-like. (Susan Kraft, “Merce Cunningham Company to Unveil Scenario at BAM,” *Staten Island Advance*, Friday, October 17, 1997) Alan Good stated in 1996, “I breathed a sigh of relief when I got there [into a Cunningham dance technique class], away from the rigid system of the Graham [Good’s prior training]. However, I have been extremely happy for the Graham training. It’s the basis of Merce’s work, actually.” (Nancy Reynolds, “A Conversation with Alan Good,” *Ballet Review*, fall 1996, p. 13)

*Torse* (1976) refers to the use of the torso throughout the dance. It is a technical demonstration of the extraordinary skill of the Cunningham dancers. There are five basic positions utilized - upright, arch, twist, tilt and curve." (Merce Cunningham, notes on *Torse*, 1976. The choreography and process are described in more detail in Jacqueline Lesschaeve, *The Dancer and the Dance*, pp. 17-24). In a sense, the subject of *Torse* was Cunningham technique itself, respectively the five basic positions described, and his version of the directions of the body that are found in ballet, and the sequences of foot exercises done in those directions. “*Torse* (1976) may or may not have been a pivot in some peoples books on Cunningham history.” (Nancy Reynolds, “A Conversation with Alan Good,” *Ballet Review*, fall 1996, p. 23)

Cunningham is known for giving his dancers a lot to think about, forever presenting new material to keep the mind from getting comfortable. Cunningham builds these challenges into his movement to keep it fresh. *Torse* ((1976) contains complexity and tremendous energy
that dance critic Arlene Croce (1980) calls the “ultimate I Ching ballet.” Croce continues, “The steps are utterly unforeseen permutations of academic combinations, and they come in such thick clusters that the audience is as winded as the dancers.” Cunningham (1985) in The Dancer and the Dance offered an interpretation of meaning for the dance by offering this description: “What it amounted to was a continual change.” Torse (1976) is an excellent example of imitating nature in its mode of operation. (Arlene Croce, “Present at the Creation,” The New Yorker, March 10, pp. 145-149)

Torse (1976) is an evaluation of the dancers’ technique put to the test [in front of an audience]. The Cunningham dance technique is about,

‘lightness, strength in the inner thigh to facilitate quick changes of direction, ballon in jumping, and a flexible spine as the coil from which all movement and energy spring.’ In class, he [Cunningham] insists that the dancer ‘center the weight’ each time the working leg returns to the pelvis to first position. The center runs up the insides of the legs into the pelvis: when one leg gestures, the muscles of the inner thigh maintain the supporting leg’s turnout, keep the body from shifting side to side. Even in rapid degages, the dancer returns weight to the working foot as it closes. With his weight directly beneath him, the dancer is never caught off guard, and Cunningham as choreographer has the option to surprise us with sudden changes in direction. The sense of spine that splits in two and runs down the inside of the legs is a mark of a well-trained dancer: his body is one piece, and everything he does involves every part of it. All Cunningham’s dancers are characterized by articulate backs and feet as well.” (Holly Brubach, “Cunningham Now,” Ballet Review, 1977)

Alan Good offers this statement on Cunningham dance technique,

“Cunningham’s classes are famous for being killers, but I think “Cunningham technique” might be a misnomer. The system he presented wasn’t scientific or anatomically sensible, but I don’t think that was ever frustrating for most dancers and me because we augmented our Merce class work with ballet class. Incidentally, I think he probably injected his classes with those same kinds of polarizing elements as Balanchine did, that fascination with pushing faster and slow slower. Maybe it’s as simple as their having that time together at the school in 1947. I hope somebody writes the story about the vine between Balanchine and Cunningham, and the way they watched each other work and what they pretended not to notice about the other but actually did pay some attention to. Anyway, Merce doesn’t illuminate you about your anatomy the way other teachers do. That’s not why I was in his class.” (Nancy Reynolds, “A Conversation with Alan Good,” Ballet Review, fall 1996, p. 12-13)

“Merce, for his part, was impressed by Balanchine’s continual exploration of new movement. An important element in Balanchine’s work was the sculptural, the arrangement of two or three or more bodies in space, so that the space around and between them was as important as the shapes they made.” Balanchine chose to show his dancers with both tighter closed
positions, and positions that are more expansive. He stretched the ‘range’ of movement possibilities. (David Vaughan, “Notes on the Cunningham Repertory,” *Ballet Review*, spring 1988, p. 62)

In 1988, individuals were still trying to figure out Cunningham’s work. Though many had a fairly articulate idea of his approach and philosophical intent, David Vaughan offered the following statement in *Ballet Review*, “One often hears, or reads, nowadays that there is a ‘new’ dramatic content in Cunningham’s recent work, also that there is a ‘new’ balletic look to it. Neither of these seems to me to be ‘new’ at all, however true it is that more of the dancers are balletically trained than used to be the case. Richard Glasstone, who for many years was the Cecchetti teacher at the Royal Ballet School, has said that he finds in Cunningham’s work the only true Cecchetti style to be seen anywhere today - épaulement and all, presumably (Barnes also said that ‘the classic pirouette [is] used one at a time rather than in multiple’; one could, of course, cite many examples of at least double pirouettes in Cunningham’s work.) (David Vaughan, “Notes on the Cunningham Repertory,” *Ballet Review*, spring 1988, p. 55).

**Events**

*Events* began in 1964. *Events* are performances comprised of excerpts from various Cunningham dance works. Cunningham uses this choreographic device to keep his repertoire alive and manipulates sections of pieces for each *Event*. It is a way for audiences to see and experience the diversity of Cunningham’s work in a single experience. This technique facilitates performances in alternative spaces such as museums, hallways and open spaces, in addition to the stage. The term *Event* identifies his current use of the technique for example; Lincoln Center ‘Out of Doors’ Event, and Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) Event.

In 1964, a critic published the following statement regarding the work of Cunningham, “Merce Cunningham’s work is of the highest quality and of great importance. It searches in new directions, it is free, it is open to the play of all of the forces which artists sense without
being able to control—and yet it is precise, classical and severe. This is a mysterious marriage brought about by an intense creativity. The work of Merce Cunningham’s group is in the tradition of Martha Graham in many ways, but in one most of all. The very things that are criticized, laughed at and ignored will only a few months later be imitated everywhere.” (Merce Cunningham Dance Company Concert Program, Sadler Wells Theatre, 27 July -August 1, 1964).

Cunningham’s Events, past and present, are composed of earlier dances, either in whole or in part, performed in continuous sequence for over an hour. They are unique self-anthologies drawn from an ample repertoire. Though different in detail, every Event has the same theme, which is the range and characteristics of Cunningham’s choreography. An Event is a series of sequences that are essentially independent of each other (and yet complimentary). The first Cunningham Event entitled, Museum Event No. 1, was performed in the evening on June 24, 1964 at Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts, Vienna, Austria to the music of John Cage’s Atlas Eclipticalis. The concept of an Event had derived from the of Cage’s Black Mountain theater piece twelve years before. (Katherine S. Lobach, “Definitely Not Three-Quarter Time,” June 1964, reproduced in Cunningham, “Story / tale of a dance and a tour [Part 1], Dance Ink 6, no.1, spring 1995: 18)

An interesting side note, by the middle of the sixties 1965-1966, painters such as Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg were selling their works explicitly to produce Merce Cunningham’s performances in New York City. In the late sixties, Cunningham was the key ‘issue’ dividing the world of modern dance. What a person thought of his work would usually indicate what else he or she liked or disliked on the current scene, if not in contemporary art in general. (Richard Kostelanetz, “The Avant-Garde Establishment: Cunningham Revisited,” Dance Magazine, July 1982, p. 56)

In Events, Cunningham selects sequences from the repertoire and customizes the collage to suit the physical limitations of the performing space. Cunningham states, “If the space allows, things are superimposed, [with] more than onetiming goingon at once. So, [these
Events can be given in circumstances or physical set-ups which otherwise would not be useful or not used in this way— in gymnasiums, in museums, out of doors. One I liked so much was in Grand Central Station in New York City. It was wonderful.” (Christopher Cook, “Forms of Life,” Dance Now, summer 1997, pp. 64-65)

Events have been associated to certain characteristics of Zen arts. Concepts such as simplicity, artlessness, inwardness, emptiness, suggestibility, [and] deliberate incompleteness are particularly found in Cunningham’s Events. The video Event for Television, produced in 1977, displays the kind of fluid incompleteness found in the Zen arts. While each of the eight sections of the ‘Event’ (Antic Meet, Scramble, Septet, Solo, Rainforest, Westbeth, Video Triangle) has its own costumes and decor, the sections are not treated as separate dances. Some of the sections are abruptly replaced, while others overlap into the next dance.

In 1976, Cunningham said of Event for Television, “Equal emphasis on each movement gives the impression that no one movement is more important than another. Every movement makes a unique statement, a suchness, as expressed in Zen terminology. Each dancer appears variously as soloist, partner or part of a large group; maintaining an individuality while contributing to the “exemplification of energies achieved by the company as a whole.” (Merce Cunningham, “Narrative for Event for Television,” Merrill Brockway, Director, WNET, Dance in America)

Events have caused controversy. According the Jack Anderson (1975-76), “Merce Cunningham has often been a problem. His treatment of music and decor has been a problem. His utilization of chance has been a problem. The latest problem Cunningham has posed for dance-goers is that of the Theater Event.” (Since 1964, Cunningham has performed over five hundred Events, combining dances in different ways to adapt to particular performance needs and available space.) Anderson offers an interpretation of Theater Events that applies to all of Cunningham choreography:

“There is, though, at least one way of regarding Events which can make them less forbidding, a point of view emanating from the philosophy which produced them in the first place. Cunningham, John Cage, and other artists in their circle regard art as an imitation of
nature—but not in any literal sense, for that might result in nothing more than a superfluous replication of objects. Rather, they wish to imitate nature in its manner of operation. For them, the universe is Heraclitean, forever open to metamorphosis. *Events*, then, are attempts to reproduce in miniature the workings of the universe... The 'experience of the dance' Cunningham says he desires *Events* to provide is thus very much like the experience of life itself.” (Marilyn Vaughan Drown, “Merce Cunningham and Meaning: The Zen Connection,” in *Merce Cunningham: Creative Elements*, Vol. 4, No. 3, p.20)

During the late 1960’s, the Cunningham Dance Company often performed lecture demonstrations in schools. One of the school visits was at the Francis W. Parker School in Chicago, Illinois. The audiences were mostly children aged seven to twelve, bussed in from “poverty areas”—uninitiated into the mysteries of avant-garde dance. Cunningham, introducing the programs, spoke with his usual clarity and lack of pretension. “Dancing is just as interesting as anything else, but you have to look at it differently. Some things can be understood in different ways than through the mind. They can be understood through the eye, and this we call the kinesthetic sense.” (Merce Cunningham quoted in Michael Williams, “Merce Breaks New Ground,” *Chicago Daily News*, 19 October 1966, sect. 6, p. 53)

One Chicago critic called the performance for the elementary school children “very well-meaning, but completely unrealistic for young children. The wrong people were invited at the wrong time.” (Ann Barzel, “Double Header for Dance Fans,” *Chicago American*, 20 October 1966) In fact, however, the children were quiet and attentive. As a local dance educator said, “Audiences, even if they don’t know very much about dancing, sense very quickly whether or not you know what you are doing. And if they sense that (you know what you are doing) they are likely to accept it even if they don’t know what you are doing.” (Shirley Centner, quoted in David Vaughan, “Performing for the Right People,” *Ballet Review* vol. 1 no.6, 1967)

*Grand Central Event* (1987) was an *Event* that occurred in Grand Central Station in New York City. A stage was erected in the main lobby and commuters viewed the work as they passed to and from the trains (Actually, most stopped to watch the dancing). Chance operations determined which dancers would perform each section, in which area of the stage. Each phrase had to stay within the square in which it began; then the dancers could move to
another square. Cunningham sometimes had to make an adjustment if the chance process
demanded that the dancers move into a space already occupied, but Cunningham found the
limitations interesting.

Technology/Video

In 1961, Cunningham created his first dance specifically for television, a Suite de
danses (ten minutes in length) to a jazz score by the Canadian composer Serge Garrett.
Cunningham quickly realized that the space seen by the camera was different from that of
the stage: "I remember trying to figure out things for the camera, but I knew so little, and we
had so little time, that I had no way of knowing whether it worked or not." (David Vaughan,
Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years, p. 125)

In 1973, Merce Cunningham choreographed Changing Steps. The piece consisted of ten
solos (demonstrating the soloists' strengths), five duets, three trios, two quartets and two
quintets, which could be performed, in any order, in any space, in any combination.
Cunningham choreographed the dance in the small studio (the size of an average living room)
at Westbeth. While working on this piece, he was beginning to think about the possibilities a
camera could have on his creative work. Cunningham himself was beginning to be interested
in the possibilities of choreography for the camera. "We (Cunningham and Cage) bought one
camera to begin with, I had to learn how to switch it on and off, that was my level." (Merce
Cunningham, quoted in Lesschaeve, The Dancer and the Dance, p. 190)

A Video Event (1974) was shown in two parts. Part I consisted of a company class, a
short section from Winterbranch (1964), the Cunningham solo at the beginning of Second Hand
(1970), an excerpt from Sounddance (1975), and TV Rerun (1972). Part II consisted of rehearsal
footage from Sounddance (1975), Changing Steps (1973), Landrover (1972), and Signals (1970).
His next video was entitled, Westbeth (1974) for eleven dancers. This video was primarily an
experiment in what the camera could and could not do. Charles Atlas (Cunningham's first
resident filmmaker) experimented with close-up, mid and full shots. (Merce Cunningham, *The Dancer and the Dance*, p. 190-91)

Locale (1979) was choreographed and filmed at Westbeth. Merce Cunningham and Charles Atlas spent several weeks on advance planning, since the project was especially complicated. The filming of Locale (1979) was to be different than the others, the camera work was also choreographed and moved in and through the studio space. Atlas also recorded the making of Locale (1979) in a documentary called Roamin' (1979) using some material shot during the filming as well as out-takes from Locale (1979) itself. Roamin' (1979) provides hilarious glimpses behind the scenes - the dancers scuttling around to re-enter on another side, climbing over cables, or jumping out of the way of a dolly or crane. Atlas's assistant, Elliot Caplan, devised an elaborate system of pulley's to pull cables out of the shot as the camera pursued its restless path. (Jacqueline Lesschaeve, *The Dancer and the Dance*, pp. 195-99) and Vaughan, “Locale: The Collaboration of Merce Cunningham and Charles Atlas,” *Millennium Film Journal* 10/11 (Fall/Winter 1981/1982). Reprinted in Richard Kostelanetz, ed. *Merce Cunningham/Dancing in Space and Time*, pp. 151-55.

In 1983, Coast Zone (1983) was filmed at the Synod House of New York's Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine. Crane shots were possible in this space. The choreography and camera movement was created through chance operations. The sequence and overlapping of movements and the number of dancers to be seen at any given moment, and the space the dancers were to be in as well as the changes of camera positions were initiated by chance means. “I used chance process to determine the camera positions, how many close-ups, middle range and back shots there would be and what the dancers do from the close-ups - whether they go to the middle, back or exit.” (Merce Cunningham, quoted in Jennifer Dunning, “New 'Adventure' Begins for Merce Cunningham,” *New York Times*, 20 March 1983)

Footwork has always been a staple of the Cunningham dance technique, and it is best seen in Coast Zone (1983). “That persistent clarity of dimensions - with which Cunningham’s dancers pose and move in space, and to which Cunningham alerts us through varied views of
their dancing—makes his basic way of working different from his ‘modern’ peers. Nowhere else in the area of barefoot dancing do we see such a full use of the foot as from Cunningham. The full definition of the foot is an understandably pertinent detail to someone whose formal concerns with dancing’s physical dimensions are as considered as Cunningham’s. Cunningham addresses the foot as a separate appendage to the leg and as a means of extending the length of the leg—makes his barefoot technique unique.” (David Vaughan, “Notes on the Cunningham Repertory,” Ballet Review, spring 1988, p. 59).

Points in Space (1986) was Merce Cunningham and Elliot Caplan’s (principle film maker for Cunningham, replacing Charles Atlas) most ambitious video project. The title arrives from Albert Einstein’s statement, “There are no fixed points in space,” a favored quotation of Merce Cunningham’s. In the dance Points in Space (1986), the dancers create a kaleidoscopic effect by creating peripheral movements [movements that define and reach out into the performers kinesphere] that catch the eye, transform into new formations, and move to something new. These changing patterns, groupings of dancers, are asymmetrical and complex, can also be symmetrical and simple, providing a space-time continuum onstage.

Points in Space, (1986) is a work in seven sections, their tempo alternating between fast and slow. In a March 1988 interview with Nancy Vreeland Dalva, Cunningham said the following regarding the virtues of video in Points in Space (1986), “I think the camera is so different from the stage. I don’t see the point in simply using it as I would to make it look like a stage piece. It seems to me a visual medium to be used for what it is. It’s not easy, but then neither is the stage easy. It’s just more familiar. There are possibilities with it [the camera] that don’t exist on the stage. You must change the size of somebody. You can change the dimension. You can change the angle of the way you see somebody. A person could turn on the stage but you would see the turning, whereas with the camera, it can suddenly be turned, because you can cut from one camera to another. It gives you the chance to see something in a way that you wouldn’t see otherwise.” (Nancy Vreeland Dalva, “The I Ching and Me: A Conversation with Merce Cunningham, Dance Magazine, March 1988, p.60)
In 1988, Merce Cunningham choreographed *Eleven*. Elliot Caplan, the resident company film maker until February of 1998, observed that much of the movement in space in *Eleven* was lateral, and speculated that this might reflect the influence of video [spatial] on Cunningham's work. Cunningham agreed that this might be the case. (David Vaughan, *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*, p. 237) Cunningham found *Eleven* (1988) spatially challenging; he thought and experimented a great deal with how to move the dancers from one space to another, in terms of rhythm, movement, and time. Cunningham stated, "I sometimes had to change things," (David Vaughan, "Notes on the Cunningham Repertory," *Ballet Review*, spring 1988, p. 61)

Elliot Caplan was busy at work creating *Cage/Cunningham* for a few years, and finished the film in 1991. The documentary included film footage of the company in rehearsal, performance, interviews with Cage and Cunningham and many of their friends and associates, and archival material. As with Cage's wishes, the film was edited through chance procedures.

*Beach Birds* (1991) was choreographed using the computer program LifeForms™. First choreographed for the stage, it was filmed in 1992 and entitled, *Beach Birds for Camera*. The film version was slightly shorter than the stage version with an additional three dancers, known as 'the fleas' in the back. *Beach Bird for Camera* (1992) became one of the most successful video project for Elliot Caplan. It was a work for eleven dancers. As Cunningham himself put it,

"It is all based on individual physical phrasing. The dancers don't have to be exactly together. They can dance like a flock of birds, when they suddenly take off. They are not really together; they just do it at the same time." (Merce Cunningham, quoted in Ursula Fraefel, "Dancing - Not Counting," *Der Tanz der Dinge*, Switzerland, no. 13, September - November 1991) "I had three things in mind: one was birds, or animals or whatever, but also humans on the beach and also one of the things that I love so much on shores - the way you are looking at a rock and you go around it, and it looks different each time, as though it were alive too. It is not meant to be a particular bird, but I used the idea of a bird, and then since dancers are also human beings, I thought I might as well include that. (Ibid.)

Cunningham admitted that his memories and emotions about the sea had powerfully influenced *Beach Birds* (1991). Cunningham states,
'Not,' he insists 'in a particularized way. But I remember sand dunes from my early
days on California beaches, the look and shape of them, also the way people behave on the
beach and the way stones and sand have a very different look when they're by the sea with
the whole atmosphere. When you see a bird on the beach pecking her way through sand. It's
so marvelous to my eye.' (Merce Cunningham, quoted in Ursula Fraefel, "Dancing - Not
Counting," Der Tanz der Dinge, Switzerland, no. 13, September - November 1991)

*Installations* (1996) is a dance work with film by Elliot Caplan. In this piece, there is
minimal moving video sequences to a score by Trimplin entitled, *Thirteenstiches* (1996). The
dancers appear to be hanging like mobiles. Elliot said of his work and *Installations* (1996),

"As designer as well as filmmaker, my work with dance is direct. I had to be clear. My
intention is to maintain a situation for the audience where the viewer's eye can roam the
stage alternating between live performance and recorded image. This kind of experience can be
lively for the dancer and engaging for the viewer. It should be like looking at a painting,
rather than watching television. There should be a lot to see. Overall, I seek to intensify the
dance experience, not get in its way." (Merce Cunningham, World Wide Web site, Repertory:
Notes p.3)

*LifeForms™/Motion Capture*

There was a time when choreographers worked exclusively with human bodies and
music; Merce Cunningham changed this with his use of LifeForms™. It allows for work on
choreographic components, separately and simultaneously, on a computer screen. One feature
is a single manipulative body drawn in concentric circles to suggest a three-dimensional figure.
Cunningham can select basic dance positions such as plié (bend) and relevé (rise). He can also
rotate or tilt the stage to view the dance from a different perspective. Core movements can be
fine-tuned with potentiometers (the two globes on the screen above), which are dials that
regulate specifics like speed of a movement, the height of a jump or the articulation of a joint.
(Dunning, "Dance by the Light of the Tube," The New York Times Magazine, February 10,
1991)

*Trackers* (1991), a large work for eleven dancers and Cunningham, (1991) was the first
dance made on the three-dimensional human movement animation program LifeForms™,
invented by Dr. Tom Calvert at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, British Columbia.
Calvert collaborated with two Simon Fraser University, choreographers, Catherine Lee and
Thecla Schiphorst, helped in the creation of dance. The choreography employs some unusual
lifting, and straight-forward calisthetics. Cunningham dances in this piece with a portable barre. The barre supports Cunningham, and separates him from the dancers. Cunningham states,

"The first thing I did on the computer was the walking sequence - so again it's like "tracking." Twenty-five to thirty percent of the movement was worked out on the computer in some way; sometimes it was just a stance, which I would put into the memory like a photograph. I would put in one, then another, and I'd have to figure out how to get from one to the other. At the time, the capability of making a whole phrase didn't exist. (Merce Cunningham, quoted in David Vaughan, Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years, p. 256)

Cunningham used, and continues to use, the LifeForms™ program with chance operations. A device had been incorporated into the LifeForms™ program to allow him to use chance to create movement phrases. "The thing that interested me most, from the very start," Cunningham told an interviewer, "was not the memory - it wasn't simply notation - but the fact that I could make new things. I look at somethings and say, Well, that's impossible for a dancer to do. But if I looked at it long enough I could think of a way it could be done." (Merce Cunningham, quoted in Robert Greskovic, "Dancing with a Mouse," Los Angeles Times, 5 May 1991)

Certain movements in Trackers (1991) such as the angular movements of the arms performed in a counter-rhythm to those of the legs, were instantly recognizable as having originated in the computer. (Cunningham's method was to choreograph the legs, followed by arms and upper body, and then put them together. He taught the phrases to his dancers in the same way) "I don't expect the dancers to look like the computer. Do you expect the dancers to look like Labanotation?" (Merce Cunningham, quoted in Susan Mehalick, "Still a Modernist at 74," Berkshire Eagle, 4, July 1993) Trackers (1991) was a challenging Cunningham dance, due to the computer.

In 1996, Alan Good [company member during the introduction to LifeForms™ choreography] stated, "Before Trackers (1991) I think once in a blue moon he'd give a little shoulder thing in the middle of a phrase or a little hip thing. But those were abnormalities that just kept us on our toes. They weren't part of the vocabulary. But lately there's a lot more happening with arms. Starting with Trackers (1991), Cunningham's defined a lot of new arm positions. They go behind you a lot more, behind you straight. There's a difference between right behind you and diagonally behind you, or right behind you, bent, and which way
they're rotated. He's putting them back there on a count and doing a completely different arm position on the next count, and the next, and the next."

Alan Good continues,

"Or he's having you run or jump holding arm positions, very unconventional for Merce. He didn't have the quarter of the arm vocabulary five years as he does now. Arms have a lot of articulation and they're not weight bearing, so you can do a lot of funny stuff with them. There's also head stuff, and the torso stuff is there, but it always has been. Nowadays it's being used a little differently, maybe just because there are more arm things. Merce has what in word processing we'd call macros, there were certain patterns he would go in. Now that's getting jumbling up with a lot of specific count-for-count assignments in torso, arms, head, and also facing. Facing and arms, maybe head, those are new isolations."

In addition, Good closes with the following statement,

"Merce has classical positions too. He likes traveling, he likes space-eating combinations, and he likes weight change that is big and spaced and not underneath itself. That might actually have been a contribution that modern has made, or Merce has really pushed above ballet. For me, good dancers are people who have some weight in their movement, no matter what field they're in. Dancers who show energy and strength, they're exciting to me. That's one of the things that Merce taught me. (Nancy Reynolds, "A Conversation with Alan Good," *Ballet Review*, Fall 1996, p. 13)

"LifeForms™" is an animated figure with certain proclivities. One of the famous examples is that in the teaching of *Trackers* (1991) Merce gave a number of arm positions to his dancers and said, "First position is here, second here, and next position is here. And what he wanted was a line, a line that you could almost not see. He wanted us to go directly from point A to point B. In other words to depart from the radical geometry of classical port de bras, which he's always gone in for. Now he's rejected that because when they made this computer program, the only way they could get it to work was for it to take direct paths [spatial pathways] between different positions." (Nancy Reynolds, "A Conversation with Alan Good," *Ballet Review*, Fall 1996, p. 16)

"I [Merce Cunningham] use [the computer] as a tool. I will work with the figure and make a shape, put that in memory so it's there, then move the timeline along and make another shape. Then I go back and the computer goes from the first shape the next, so that what you get is this unexpected way of getting from one thing to the other. Not necessarily incredibly difficult- but it's different than the way I would think that it might be done. It brings up other kinds of possibilities, which from my point of view is very useful." (Christopher Cook, "Forms of Life," *Dance Now*, Summer 1997).

Merce Cunningham continues,

"You know you often see photographs of people doing things and you think: Well, I never saw that person do that- but the camera caught it so it's there. It's the same principle, but here you have it in movement. Say two arms moving in a way which is probably impossible to *really* do, but it opens up a whole different way of thinking about how human movement operates. So from the point of view it's a great widening. It doesn't revolutionize anything, but it simply enlarges our possibilities. That's the part that I work with and that interests me." (William Cook, "Forms of Life," *Dance Now*, Summer 1997, p. 65)
Merce Cunningham continues to utilize chance procedures with the LifeForms™ program in all of his works beginning in 1991.

Cunningham states, "I still use, so to speak, a chance procedure to go, I say, which arm? Are the arms straight or bent? They're both bent. Okay, where are they? And all of this by chance. Then I put that in the figure and then you have this shape, and then you go to the next shape and do the same thing. Well then this next figure has to go from here some way over to this, so your eye opens up-or mind does, anyway. And I think. Oh, that's marvelous—now how can I get that to the dancers? What I have is of course a tiny screen for the LifeForms™ software and it's in a very difficult situation in my studio—a small room where almost nobody could ever see it. You also have a real sense of space and time.

Merce Cunningham continues,

"You have three screens. One is the 'figure' which looks that Michelin man, only thinner, and you can articulate the joints. They call it the sequence editor. You make the shape and you put it in the memory. Then you move the timeline. They made the timeline on camera time, 30 frames per second, not on metric beat. But one knows the possibility of putting in thirty frames per second, and since I work with time in that way, that's no problem for me."

Merce Cunningham continues,

"And the timeline is another screen. Then you have a third screen which is the stage, so to speak, it's really a grid and you can put these shapes, smaller bodies— as many as you like on this thing and put the phrases that you have put in the memory onto these figures and have them move around." (William Cook, "Forms of Life," Dance Now, summer 1997, p. 66-67).

Merce Cunningham continues,

"You could in principle create a whole dance by the time you reach this third screen. It's very complicated to get it, but in principle, you could. But it would take a very, very long time. Gradually, as with all technology, the whole thing is going to get together more, so that something that now takes three operations will take one. And eventually you will be able to, I'm quite sure, to have it as a notation system for dances." (William Cook, "Forms of Life," Dance Now, summer 1997, p. 66-67).

After Cunningham creates the movement phrase on the computer, he translates the material to the company dancers in technique class and rehearsal. Cunningham states,

"That's a problem without video output to the studio. I have to take what is [on screen] and go out and then go back and so on. But it works. It's a little tedious probably, but it works. And things I thought would be absolutely complex for the dancers to get in the beginning were, but they picked up like children who pick up computer language, you know. They pick up the ideas so that some of them, when given these really complicated arm shapes and then ask to do them at a certain speed, they do them almost immediately. Some of them, not all of them. But I think it is accepting the fact that this is possible, so you don't have any mental blocks, like kids with video games, and then just go ahead and do it." (William Cook, "Forms of Life," Dance Now, summer 1997, p. 67).
Merce Cunningham continues,

"I don’t expect the dancers to look like the figure, nor do I expect the figure to really move exactly like the person does, any more than like when you use a typewriter it doesn’t keep you from writing, so to speak, or from using words. And that’s my principle about it: it’s a tool to work with and it brings up possibilities.” (William Cook, “Forms of Life,” Dance Now, summer1997, p. 66-67).

Patricia Lent (company dancer from 1984 – 1993) observes that in the time since Cunningham has been using the computer program LifeForms™, the rhythm has changed in his phrases,

“They don’t seem to be rhythmical as they used to be. It’s more count after count, and less about rhythmical changes. And there is more unison in the pieces. I think Merce started at the beginning to learn LifeForms™ and saw value in learning it, and he gave himself assignments. He started with arms and he started with simple walking, and that’s what you saw in the first piece, Trackers (1991). Every stage he’s at gets put into a dance. Like any educational system, any chapter that you’re on necessarily ignores other parts of what you may or may not have learned. I miss the rhythm. It had seemed a cardinal rule: that phrases shall be rhythmical, rhythm shall be a focus of the choreography, and dancers shall approach the rhythm as being the first intelligence of a step, as opposed to a level change or focus or dramatic expression or the amount of space they cover or technique.”

In 1994, Lesley-Anne Sayers stated in Dance Theatre Journal: “Suddenswift changes in direction and frenzied bursts of activity contrast with movements of calm shape exploration. Finding the rhythm of Cunningham’s choreography, the accents and emphasis and flow of the movement phrases, and the relation to the other phrases, can be the first way in which a spectator knows he or she is really watching. Suddenly it is complex rather than confusing.” (Lesley-Anne Sayers, Dance Theatre Journal, Volume 11, No. 3, Autumn1994)

Michael Cole, (dancer with the company from 1989 – 1997) finds LifeForms™ quite interesting,

“It’s kind of redefining the way that dance can look. A lot of what my work has been about so far is exploring the interplay between what is humanly possible and what isn’t. The body on the computer can just soar through space or the leg can go up extraordinarily high that the human body would have a lot of difficulty with. A lot of times what I have found is that people get sucked into, ‘Oh yeah, this is a film of a dance piece,’ and then all of a sudden something happens that could never happen with human beings, and then they gasp. And that is kind of thrilling to me, to just go back and forth between those two worlds” (Ellen Dunkel, “New and Renewed: From Cunningham to Computer,” The Record, October 10, 1997)

Ground Level Overlay (1995) is a dance work of LifeForms™ phrases. Merce Cunningham says of this piece, “This dance was began by processing phrases of movement into LifeForms™, the dance computer I utilize. It continues my interest in dancers as people dealing with movement complexities.” (Merce Cunningham, as quoted from the World Wide
The music composed by Stuart Dempster, *Underground Overlays* is dedicated to the memory of John Cage. The score, recorded in the great Abbey of Clement VI, describes events that took place during the 1976 summertour and was recorded in Avignon. The final version of the recording was done at a two million-gallon former water tank at Fort Townsend in Port Townsend, Washington.

*Scenario* (1997) Costumer Rei Kawakobo "deforms" the Cunningham dancers for the first time. In the work *Scenario* (1997), the dancers are made to wear checked kitchen towels padded with cotton bulges [actually down feathers and very hot to dance in]: yet this pregnant-like corps de ballet. Exposed to eighty-eight glaring neonlights, is not to be put off by this 'disfiguring' at all. Seemingly naked, the ensemble manages to become oblivious to their costumes.

*Pond Way* (1998) is another collaborative work with decor by the late Roy Liechtenstein and music by Brian Eno (both first-time collaborators with Cunningham). Susan Gallo, complete with flapping and fluttering sleeves designed the costumes. At times, the dancers' arms appear as wings.

*Hand Drawn Spaces* (1998) is Cunningham's first multimedia work with Motion Capture. This work was part of a traveling visual art exhibit entitled, *Body Mechanique: Digital Realms*, was at the Wexner Center for the Arts (The Ohio State University) in October of 1997. It includes hand-drawn figures, and computer animation moving three dimensionally to the seventy-one movement phrases choreographed by Merce Cunningham. Paul Kaiser, Michael Girard, and Susan Amkraut with Merce Cunningham agreed that the motions of the dancers should obey the rules of the physical world, but that the visual and spatial representation be purely mental.

*BIPED* (1999) premiered at the University of California Cal Arts in April of 1999 and at the New York State Theater in July of 1999. The work integrates computer-generated figures moving with enormous hand-drawn projections on and around the performing space. It is a marriage of human and digital forms. In the case of *BIPED*, two Cunningham Dance
Company members wearing reflective markers performed phrases of the work’s choreography in a Brooklyn studio for three hours in February of 1999. Through special cameras that track only the markers, Riverbed’s computers made a numeric recording of each recording. Character studio transformed the movement data files into flowing figures. The computer images appear for twenty-three of forty-five minutes of the work. The look varies from crayon-drawn humans, to loosely assembled white dots to a shadowy cubist painting. (Kelly A. Zito, “A Marriage of Motion,” Larin Independent Journal, Monday, May 3, 1999)

*BIPED* (1999) is considered by Ann Murphy, dance critic for the *East Bay Express*, “is the least successful collaboration I can remember and is a lesson in what happens to the dance when the production elements don’t operate at or near the same stratospheric level as the choreographer” (Ann Murray, *Express*, April 30, 1999). Octavio Roca states that *BIPED* “captures dance in three-dimensions and may turn out to be one of the biggest breakthroughs in the history of dance notation and preservation.” (Octavio Roca, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, Monday, April 26, 1999)

**Laban Movement Analysis**

Scholars study dance from many points of view. They may focus on the historical development of a dance form, examine the content in which a particular dance event occurs, explore the background of those that dance and how it relates to social structure, or explore the movement process itself - the dancing. To allow the most meaningful research to be carried out, a discipline must develop tools and methodologies that have a certain consensus of validity and broad applicability. In this study, Laban Movement Analysis was the primary tool in the exploration of Cunningham’s unique technique. Laban Movement Analysis was utilized as an evaluation instrument in this study. Also, This study could have been designed without the implementation of LMA (Laban Movement Analysis) as an inquiry tool. LMA is a sophisticated system of describing, identifying and observing movement. It is what I chose to
use based on my skills as a certified movement analyst and interests in LMA's application in dance education.

The theory and vocabulary provided in this section is important to understanding the methods and materials in a Laban Movement Analysis framework. "Laban Movement Analysis is not a closed, historical system reserved for use by a few, but a complex, sophisticated, highly developed, and continually evolving body of material. Everyone has access to the material. It provides an objective language for describing movement, tools for developing and analyzing curricula, and an approach to understanding the body." (Peggy Swartz, "Laban Movement Analysis: Theory and Application," JOPERD, February 1995, p.26).

"Laban Movement Analysis involves training and refining how one perceives movement, it can help teachers develop curriculum, refine teaching and coaching styles, and develop a broad philosophical base from which the rest of their work may evolve. Laban Movement Analysis is a dynamic and evolving set of principles that provide a language with which to describe and direct movement experiences. Laban Movement Analysis focuses attention on dynamics of movement, spatial range, and principles of physical development and coordination"(Peggy Swartz, "Laban Movement Analysis: Theory and Application," JOPERD, February 1995, pp.25-26).

Since Modern Educational Dance was published in 1948 in England, many dance educators', have acknowledged Rudolf Laban's (1879-1958) influence in dance teaching materials. Children's views of their world, expressivity in movement, and ability to see and describe similarities and differences in movement are enhanced by a teacher's application of Laban theory. Rudolf Laban recognized that his approach to teaching dance enabled children to realize their innermost selves, to discover thoughts and feelings that sometimes cannot be verbalized." (Jacqueline Davis, "Laban Movement Analysis: A Key to Individualizing Children's Dance," JOPERD, February 1995, p. 31).

"Rudolf Laban's approach supports a humanistic learning process. His principles of human movement provide tools teachers can use to encourage and develop children's innate

"We are not concerned with training dancers, with producing a skilled technical performance, nor are we concerned with developing a set style. We are concerned with educating through movement, with fostering the child's love of movement and with giving scope for discovery, imagination, and intuition." (Joan Russell, *Creative Dance in the Primary School*, London: Macdonald and Evans, 1965, p.17)

Russell's *Creative Dance in the Primary School* quickly became a dance education classic with its clear descriptions of movement utilizing Laban's four elements of movement: 1) Body, 2) Effort, 3) Space and, 4) Shape. In addition to Joan Russell, Joyce Boorman's *Creative Dance in Grades Four to Six*, and Mary Joyce's *First Steps in Teaching Creative Dance to Children*, are recognized as classic examples of 'ground-breaking' dance education theory and application. All stress teaching 'creative improvised' movement, as opposed to set dance steps or preset movement sequences.

Laban Movement Analysis is a theoretical framework and language for describing movement. The basic concepts of Body, Effort, Shape, and Space are explored through movement experiences, observation, and theoretical discussion in addition to the history and application of Laban Movement Analysis. Three crystalline forms build the relationship between B-E-S-S (body, effort, space, and shape). The five-pointed star with body, relationship, space, shape, and effort. The square with B-E-S-S and the triangle with effort, body, (shape or shaping) and space. "Using Laban principles does not require using Laban jargon, although it can be used efficiently in pupils over the age of eight or nine. Commonly, imagery and metaphor are used to convey the concepts, especially in younger children." (Trish Gorman, "Laban Movement Analysis: Teaching through Imagery and Awareness," *Dance Teacher Now*, September – October 1980, p. 22). Laban Movement Analysis offers the teacher three tools: a sense of her own movement style (which might have been quite unconscious before), the flexibility to adapt to the style of others, and a common language for communication between teacher and student.
Laban Movement Analysis, which until 1984 was referred to as Effort/Shape, is a somatic theory. “In addition to Laban’s familiar notation system for recording choreography and scoring movement, Rudolf Laban developed principles to conceptualize and break it (movement) down into a precise language that could be understood by all members of the profession” (Trish Gorman, “Laban Movement Analysis: Teaching through Imagery and Awareness,” Dance Teacher Now, September - October 1980, p. 19).

Body

“The first element of Laban Movement Analysis is ‘body,’” which incorporates sequences of body actions (shifting weight, locomotion, jumping, turning, gesturing) as well as articulation of body parts (flexion, extension, abduction, adduction, and rotation). The emphasis is on ‘body connected-ness’ in which imaginary lines are perceived as well as sequential muscle chains connecting the body parts into a coherent whole.” (Trish Gorman, “Laban Movement Analysis: Teaching through Imagery and Awareness,” Dance Teacher Now, September - October 1980, p. 21).

“The embodiment of Laban’s approach to body mechanic has been worked out by one of his disciples, Irmgard Bartenieff, who is responsible for bringing the Laban work to America from Europe in the 1930’s. The Bartenieff Fundamentals®, originally developed by Irmgard for the rehabilitation of Polio victims, are exercises that help the body connect itself so it can move more efficiently. Used as physical therapy by dance therapists, the idea is not simply to strengthen the muscles, but to help the person learn how to move in space. (Trish Gorman, “Laban Movement Analysis: Teaching through Imagery and Awareness,” Dance Teacher Now, September - October 1980, p. 21).

At a celebration honoring Irmgard Bartenieff’s eightieth birthday in 1980, she stated the following, “Bartenieff Fundamentals®, are the groundwork for understanding basic connections of the limbs to the trunk, and the body’s relation to space relating the performing to the environment. A teacher does not go out and teach the principles to her students per se,

Bartenieff Fundamentals® is an organized system that focuses on movement integration and harmony. When moving, our coordination is influenced by body connections, center of weight and the relationship to initiation and follow through on a given action. In developing the principles of Fundamentals, Bartenieff was concerned with internal support of the body to facilitate functional and efficient movement experiences. There are four components in Bartenieff Fundamentals®: Movement Themes, Fundamental Principles, Basic Connections or Coordination of Body Parts, and the Basic Six and Variations.

There are four movement themes in Bartenieff Fundamentals®: 1) stability and mobility, 2) function and expression, 3) exertion and recuperation and, 4) inner and outer. Postural/gestural, body actions (turns, jumps, pathways, etc.), initiations from the core, mid-limb, and distal, and sequencing such as simultaneous, successive, and sequential are explored.

There are nine fundamental principles: 1. dynamic alignment is a readiness to change and the ability to form and maintain a constellation with body parts, referred to as ‘connectedness,’ 2) the center of weight is the pelvis in the human body. It is responsible for weight shifting, weight transference, level change, and propulsion, 3) a gradated rotation uses the full range of motion in global joints with core support and accommodation, 4) initiation of movement addresses which body part leads such as the core, proximal, mid-limb, or distal, 5) sequencing is the follow through of an initiation of a given action, 6) breath support is essential for the proper use on internal support and efficient energy flow, allowing sensing three-dimensionality. 7) spatial intent is the dynamic stress of a given direction, 8) internal/core support involves breath, organs, skeletal and muscular coordination of flow, and 9) the integration of the movement principles of space, shape, and effort qualities for desired expressivity.
There are nine Basic Connections or Coordinations of Body Parts: 1) head/tail, 2) heel/sitz bones, 3) scapula/head, 4) heel/sacrum, 5) pelvic/femoral rhythm, 6) scapula/shoulder rhythm, 7) upper/lower (homologous and contralateral), 8) right/left sides (bilateral and homolateral), and 9) the developmental organization of motor patterns: cellular breathing, spinal, homologous, homolateral, and crosslateral.

Lastly, the Basic Six and Variations, which includes three preparatory exercises: Preparatory Exercise A (flexion-extension, adduction-abduction, internal-external rotation), Preparatory Exercise B (the use of vowels in control of breath), and Preparatory Exercise C (rock and roll). The Basic Six are 1) the pre-thigh lift and thigh lift, 2) pelvic forward shift, 3) pelvic lateral shift, 4) body half, 5) knee drop, alternating knee drop with arm circle, 6) arm circles, and diagonal sit-up. (Certified Movement Analyst Teaching Packet, Laban-Bartenieff Institute for Movement Studies, New York City, New York, N.D.)

Effort

The second element a Laban teacher brings to class is the concept of "Effort," a description of the manner in which a person expends his energy. When we think of Effort, we think of dynamics. Dynamics are defined in Webster's International Dictionary as powerful or pertaining to power, in physical terms, an energy, or force producing motion. Effort is one's attitude toward movement; the intention one brings to its execution. "Some fifty years ago, Doris Humphrey, Margaret H'Doubler, and Rudolf Laban initiated a shift in attitude toward dance dynamics by focusing on the rhythmic form of the movement itself. Cunningham's ideas on rhythm arising from action continued their prioritization of movement itself" (Valerie Preston Dunlop, "Dance Dynamics: Focusing on the Rhythmic Form and the Movement Itself," Dance Theatre Journal, autumn/winter 1996, p. 34).

"Dance is a non-verbal art. Laban did what he could about it, suggesting that we should stop thinking in words, that is in discrete denotative and connotative units and start thinking in movement, that is, in the process of moving as well as in the products of having

There are four movement factors: weight, space, time, and flow. “The factors of time, weight, space and flow are profitable starting points for research into the dynamics of movement expression, and not a bad starting point for research into the dynamics of a choreographic theatre work” (Valerie Preston Dunlop, “Dance Dynamics: Focusing on the Rhythmic Form and the Movement Itself,” *Dance Theatre Journal*, autumn/winter 1996, p. 38).

Each factor is broken down into two elements: fighting and indulging. The two factors of weight are strong (fighting) and light (indulging); factors of space are direct (fighting) and indirect (indulging), time affinities are quick (fighting) and sustained (indulging), and flow are bound (fighting) and free (indulging).

Effort is the quality of movement created by a specific action. Effort also addresses expanding and condensing relationships, the six ‘inner’ states (space and time, flow and weight, space and flow, weight and time, space and weight and time and flow) and three drives (spell [space-weight-flow], vision [space-time-flow] and passion [weight-time-flow]) and the eight ‘outward’ action drives (float, punch, glide, slash, wring, dab, flick, press) composed of different combinations of weight, space, and time.

**Shape**

Laban’s fourth concept of shape or shaping, includes rising and sinking in the vertical dimension (weight, light/strong), spreading and enclosing in the horizontal dimension (space, direct/indirect), advancing and retreating in the sagittal dimension (time, sustained/quick) and growing and shrinking (flow, free/bound).

**Space**

Laban Movement Analysis’ third concept of space is rooted in three geometric forms: the octahedron, the cube, and the icosahedron. Each geometric form and accompanying movements scale make clear a specific order and clarity of movement. The dimensional scale,
performed in the eight-sided octahedron, emphasizes moving centrally and/or peripherally through the center of the body along the three dimensions of the horizontal, vertical, and sagittal planes. Planes (vertical, horizontal and sagittal) are explored. In the geometric forms of the octahedron, cube and icosahedron concepts of spatial affinities and disaffinities are explored.

The diagonal scale, performed in the six-sided cube, emphasizes central and peripheral movement through and the center of the body along the four diagonals (right-forward-high to left-deep-backward, high-left-forward to deep-right-backward, high-left-backward to deep-right-forward, and high-right-backward to deep-left-forward). The cube supports the three equal spatial pulls of the diagonals. In the cube, central, peripheral and transverse pathways are explored.

When the corners of the three planes are connected, they form the twenty-sided icosahedron. The A and B Scales are performed with central, peripheral and transverse pathways in the icosahedron. The icosahedron supports off-vertical movement. (Trish Gorman, "Laban Movement Analysis: Teaching through Imagery and Awareness," Dance Teacher Now, September – October 1980, p. 20).

Recently the integration of Motif Reading and Writing is a form of written notation has been incorporated in Laban Movement Analysis. Motif reading and writing identifies the main idea in a movement sequence. Fundamental examples include vertical motif action strokes, horizontal phrasing bows, horizontal effort phrasing, horizontal shape phrasing, and vertical space phrasing. It also can include body symbols. (Certified Movement Analyst Teaching Packet, Laban-Bartenieff Institute for Movement Studies, New York City, New York, N.D.)

Summary

Chapter 2 contained a review of the literature pertinent to this study. The six significant developments that lead Merce Cunningham to large discoveries were presented.
and discussed in reference to this study. The first and most significant development was his collaborative work with composer and musician, John Cage (b.1912 - d.1992). The second development is Cunningham's use of chance procedures. The third development is Cunningham codified dance technique, which continues to evolve, as does his choreography. The fourth development is Cunningham's concept and use of Events. The fifth development is Merce Cunningham's past and current explorations with technology and video.


Chapter 2 concluded with a description of Laban Movement Analysis (B-E-S-S), the methodology utilized in accessing Cunningham's dance technique and choreography and the students' movement in this study. A definition of Laban Movement Analysis was presented. Laban Movement Analysis' basic concepts of body, Effort, Space, and Shape were presented. Bartenieff Fundamentals®, the embodiment of Laban's approach to mechanics of the body, were presented. Motif Writing was identified as a newly integrated component of Laban Movement Analysis. Prominent children's dance educators whom Use Laban's theory, such as Joan Russell, Joyce Boorman, and Mary Joyce were presented. Interviews with Louise Burns, Meg Harper, Robert Swinston, Karen (Radford) Woods and David Vaughan are located in Appendix B of this dissertation.
CHAPTER 3
EXPERIENCING AND UNDERSTANDING CUNNINGHAM

Introduction

Four elements affected the data in this study:

Element One: The Cunningham Literature. Several dance works were observed in pictorial and video form, and used as points of exploration in this study. Books and newspaper reviews were used as data in this study.

Element Two: The Cunningham Dance Studio and Company Members. Several dance studio faculty and company members participated in this study. I interviewed Burns and Harper at the Cunningham dance studio. I interviewed Woods at Ohio State University. With the exception of Swinston, a current member of the company, all are past dancers with Cunningham. The interviews with individuals affiliated with Cunningham addressed thoughts and beliefs about Cunningham and his techniques. I attended company classes, rehearsals, and performances by the company.

Element Three: Teaching Pedagogy. Initially teaching pedagogy was not a primary research area in this study. As the study progressed, I began to recognize the influence my experiences as 'learner' had on this study with three Cunningham dance technique teachers: Burns, Harper, and Woods.

Element Four: The dance created through Cunningham's techniques, PLACE.

The following section elaborates each element that affected the data of this study. Significant information used in the study is presented.
Element One: The Cunningham Literature

Merce Cunningham is interested in the architecture of the human body and the use of the dancer's kinesphere. We explored the possibilities of movements within our kinesphere. He explores the kinesphere through an in-depth investigation of the articulation of the back and lower extremities. In a Cunningham dance technique class, the initial 'codified' back exercises, or variations, are examples of movements performed within a certain 'zone.' Each back exercise addresses a specific trace-form, rotation, or flexion of the back, supported by the lower extremities. The size of the angle is determined by the individual limitations of the joints. (Meg Harper Interview, August 1998) Cunningham movement is initiated in the inner kinetic dynamosphere of the body, to the back and limbs. Our 'arm phrase' was an initial attempt at initiating movement from our 'core' or the back.

Cunningham technique incorporates a wide range of dynamic nuances and rhythms. In the Cunningham technique accentuation, dynamism and the power to change direction quickly is required. Cunningham movement is usually taught through layering in class and in choreographic settings. The dancers first learn the locomotor patterns and directions. The arms and focus are added after the dancer has a good understanding on where the movement takes place and which direction to perform the movement. Layering is a common practice with Cunningham since 1991 and many of the teachers influenced by LifeForms™. (Cook 1997) The elementary students prepared movement phrases for the university dancers to perform.

In addition, six works were analyzed in this study. Created for the stage or specifically made for film, the six works were analyzed through Laban Movement Analysis. The incorporation of video expanded the information base of the literature review. The videos provided kinesthetic illustrations of Cunningham's style and techniques. Though a great deal of Cunningham's repertoire was influential in this study, I chose to concentrate on six choreographic works from the Cunningham repertoire with the students: Torsé (1978), Event for Television (1978), Fielding Sixes (1980), Pictures (1984), Points in Space (1986) and Trackers (1991). Merce Cunningham's characteristics and techniques include a distinctive use
of rhythm, space, chance operations, and choreographic structure. The Cunningham literature, which includes video, performances, and interviews, support this finding.

Torse (1976) is identified by Nancy Dalva as the ultimate Cunningham “I Ching ballet.” (Dalva, 1998) An excerpt of the work was performed by the company at Lincoln Center in August of 1998. Torse is considered an extraordinary choreographic work demonstrating Cunningham dance technique. It incorporates warm-up exercises from the Cunningham technique class of the 1970’s, which are fundamental components of the Cunningham technique class at the studio today. The work emphasizes quick and deliberate changes of direction, various ways in which the back can move against the legs, challenging balances, leaps, and brisk footwork. There is an awareness of the dancers’ presence, poise, and a ready-to-go-in-any-direction disposition that interested me. I explored these components with my students, all characteristic elements of Cunningham movement. Torse is a classroom demonstration (behind the scenes) of Cunningham technique in a performance setting.

In Event for Television (1976), I was particularly interested in Cunningham’s application of equal emphasis on each movement indicating in a Zen framework that no one movement is more important than another. I was struck by Cunningham’s placement of numerous dancers in a small performance space. In addition, I was interested in comparing Event for Television to my class Event with Woods. I noted similarities and differences. Significantly different was the utilization of a camera to record movement. The camera directed the viewer’s eye during the dance. Our class Event challenged the viewer to ‘choose’ where to look during the dance. On television, the dancers were in costume for each dance. In our work, we performed in leotards and tights. I shared with the students the diversity in presenting movement in an Event format.

Fielding Sixes, (1980). In addition to observing this dance on a rehearsal tape at the Cunningham Dance Foundation Archives, I learned an excerpt at the Atlantic Center for the Arts Residency with Meg Harper and Merce Cunningham in August of 1997. In addition to learning the excerpt, I participated in five afternoon video sessions with Elliot Caplan and
Merce Cunningham. We learned the movement in the morning and then re-worked it for video in the afternoon. Of particular interest was how close I needed to be, next to other dancers, to remain in the frame of the camera. We were inches apart, though it did not seem so on film. The dance space was very small, and the movement was adjusted significantly for the camera. The movement was not diminished, though it was altered into the vertical dimension. Movements that are performed traditionally with great horizontal width such as side to side movements, were taken into the air, emphasizing the verticality of rising and sinking.

Fielding Sixes is an exhausting, challenging and difficult dance to execute for film. In addition to remembering choreographic phrases of movement (which were rigorous), I needed to dance in space differently from what I was accustomed to in a dance studio or stage setting. The slightest error translated into a huge error on the television screen, in addition to creating a problem for other dancers. We found ourselves re-filming every afternoon. If one person made an error, we needed to re-record the entire sequence. It was frustrating, challenging, disheartening, and exhausting. It took us (Merce Cunningham, Meg Harper, Elliot Caplan, the dancers, and filmmaker) five days, two hours per day, to successfully record our three minutes of movement. This experience was an excellent example of the degree of difficulty Cunningham's video dance works pose. Fielding Sixes provided an excellent example of a set choreographed dance work, and was very different from dancing Events. This experience provided an example of Cunningham's unique concept of ensemble and unison. This idea was used in coaching and choreographing PLACE with the students the second year of the study.

Pictures (1984) is based in 'active stillness' and 'impulsive accent transformations' from tableaux to tableaux. The use of time (stillness and movement) and shape (angular and curved) is stunning in Pictures, and a Cunningham technique I desired to explore in this study. In PLACE (1998), initial explorations in Cunningham's techniques included tableaux's and an emphasis on negative space in shapes. The tableaux's performed in PLACE were captured from photographs in the Cunningham literature. In August of 1998, with the permission of
David Vaughan, Merce Cunningham Dance Foundation Archivist, I video recorded an excerpt of *Pictures* performed by the company on May 28, 1987 and showed it to the dancers.

*Points in Space* (1986) was Cunningham's and Caplan's most ambitious video project. The title comes from Einstein's conception that; "there are no fixed points in space," a theory I used in our exploration of Cunningham's techniques. The work was a clear demonstration of symmetry/asymmetry, pathways (in space and in the dancers' kinesphere), and simple and complex rhythmic patterns. The work was presented in a documentary format. Part one addressed the creative and collaborative process, and part two presented the piece for the camera. This work was helpful in our exploration of Cunningham's unique implementation of collaboration. I had the opportunity to discuss this work at great length with Caplan at the Atlantic Center for the Arts Residency in August of 1997. *Points in Space* (1986) was precisely choreographed for the camera. *Points in Space* is a superb example of Cunningham's use of duets and ensemble sections. On several occasions, Woods commented on the intensity of working on this piece and with dance and film.

*Trackers* (1991) was Cunningham's first attempt at using the human movement animation program, LifeForms™ in his choreography. The reviews were not supportive of his new 'computer collaborator.' Actually, the reviews were quite harsh and critical. Of particular interest, and of use in my study, was the 'actual' computer program. In our second version with the dancers from the Department of Dance, the elementary school students created movement for the older dancers to perform on a PowerMac I set up in my office at school. This exercise was interesting, and the students spent many hours preparing phrases for the older dancers. The utilization of LifeForms™ provided a means of experimentation and exploration of movement. Cunningham has created his dances, in most cases, since 1991 with LifeForms™.
Element Two: The Cunningham Dance Studio and Company

During this study, I attended eight concerts by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in three states: Pennsylvania, Michigan and New York. ironically, I attended my first Cunningham Dance Company Concert as a dance scholarship student at the American College Dance Festival in Durham, North Carolina in June and July of 1984. In March of 1985, I attended a second concert at Detroit's Music Hall. At that time, Woods and Burns were performing company members with The Merce Company Dance Company.

The concerts provided a venue for experiencing the realm of Merce Cunningham's work. As the study progressed, especially following the Cunningham Studio performances, additional opportunities arose. I assisted the company manager, Trevor Carlson, at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in August of 1998. I worked at The Merce Cunningham Dance Foundation 'VIP will call' booth for the executive director of the Cunningham Foundation at the New York State Theater in July of 1999, met Jasper Johns, and observed several company classes and rehearsals.

Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, October 1997


On Saturday, October 18, 1997, the morning and afternoon contained a series of lectures, demonstrations and multi-media installations of Cunningham's collaborative works sponsored by BAM. Laura Kuhn, director of the Cage Trust, guided a one-on-one conversation with Cunningham. Immediately following was a lecture-demonstration presented by multimedia/interactive artists Paul Kaiser, Shelley Eshkar, Michael Girald, and Susan
Amkraut. The multimedia presentation was a very early introductory example of Motion Capture and Cunningham's new choreographic work, BIPED, which premiered in April of 1999. Program B included Installations (1996), Windows (1995) and BAMevent (1997): The Run (1952), Sequences from Suite for Five (1956), Winterbranch (1964), and Scramble (1967).

At this time, David Covey served as the technical director and lighting designer for The Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Covey played a vital role in this study at the Cunningham Dance Studio in April of 1998.

Byham Theater, Pennsylvania, December 1997

On Friday, December 5, 1997, the elementary school students and I attended a performance of the Cunningham Dance Company at the Byham Theater in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Together, with their parents and siblings, we carpooled to the theatre. The concert program included Rondo (1996), Ground Level Overlay (1995), and Sounddance (1974).

A highlight of the evening was an opportunity to participate in an informal post-performance dialogue with Cunningham and Vaughan. The students were amazed at Cunningham's 'free-wheelin' hairstyle and the fact that he was elderly and bossed people around. It was the first time the dancers and parents had the opportunity to see Cunningham as a human being, and person. Almost everyone loved the performance of the company, a few thought the Sounddance score was 'of course' too loud.

Lincoln Center "Out of Doors" New York, August 1998

On Wednesday July 5, 1998, I traveled to New York City to attend the outdoor performance of the Cunningham Dance Company on Friday August 7, 1998 in Damrosch Park. Through special invitation, I attended two studio performances on Saturday and Sunday evenings, August 8 and 9th. During my stay, I participated in Cunningham technique classes, observed company class taught by Cunningham (permission from Cunningham), and interviewed David Vaughan (Merce Cunningham Dance Foundation Archivist), Louise Burns and Meg Harper.
Upon my arrival, I introduced myself to the studio administrator, Sutton Brown who, at the time, was in need of ushers for the concerts on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. I was assigned as usher for The Cunningham Dance Foundation reserved seating section at the performance. I ran short errands for the company dancers before each performance. I observed the warm-up and dress rehearsal, in addition to the performance.

Powers Center for the Arts, Michigan, February 1999

In February of 1999, I traveled with Daniel-Aguzzoli Roberts, current understudy with the Cunningham Dance Company, to Ann Arbor Powers Center for the Performing Arts. Under the sponsorship of the University Musical Society, the center presented a series of activities entitled, “ImMERCE,” and a one-week technique residency. I attended the Thursday evening, February 11th interview conducted by Roger Copland, Professor of Theater and Dance at Oberlin College. The interview took place at the Dance Department at the University of Michigan. It included a dialogue between Cunningham and Copland, video excerpts from significant works, discussion of the influence of John Cage on Cunningham’s work and technology (LifeForms™ and Motion Capture). Copland was very helpful in this study. I was initially scheduled to drive him to Ann Arbor, but our schedules did not mix all too well at that time.

On Friday, February 12th, I observed the company class and dress rehearsal directed by Cunningham in the theater of the Powers Center for the Performing Arts. Following a demanding company technique class, the dancers received a fifteen - minute break. Most scurried for water, fruit, the company medicine box or the dressing rooms.

During company class, the stage technicians, under the direction of Technical Director Aaron Copp (Covey returned to Ohio State University in September of 1998) hung drops and focused lights. The musicians, under the direction of the music director Takehisa Kosugi, set up their electronic equipment and instruments and adjusted sound levels. The company presented two programs.
Program A included *Rondo* (1996), *Pond Way* (1998), and *Scenario* (1997). *Rondo* (1996) has two sections. The first is variable from performance to performance in the order of the continuity of the eight short dances that comprise it. The second section is denser and has a shift of pace, like a sudden change in the weather. The material for *Rondo* has been worked out, in part, on the dance computer program, LifeForms™. (Merce Cunningham, Concert Program Note, February 11, 1998) This piece is of particular importance to this study due to its 'chance operations' choreographic structure.

On Saturday morning, I observed the company class and dress rehearsal of Program B in the theater, and participated in Cunningham Study Day with David Vaughan. I attended the concert in the evening.

Saturday evenings Program B included *Event* (1999), *Ground Level Overlay* (1995), and *Sounddance* (1974). *Event* included excerpts from Cunningham repertoire from the 1960's to now. The music for each *Event* performance is composed and performed by the company musicians. *Event* consists of complete dances, excerpts of dances, and new sequences arranged for this performance. Several separate activities happened at the same time, to not allow so much an evening of dances as an experience of dance.

In discussing *Ground Level Overlay* (1995) Merce Cunningham states, "The dance was begun by processing phrases of movement into "LifeForms™," the dance computer I utilize. It continues my interest in dancers as people dealing with movement complexities." (Merce Cunningham, Concert Program Note, February 12, 1998).

*Sounddance* (1974) is a vigorous and fast piece. The dancers enter and exit through a tent-like sand colored opening in the back of the stage. Cunningham states, "The structural idea is to have the ten dancers enter and exit from upstage center in different ways, one after the other. The footwork and torso movements are complex. The general impression is of the space observed under a microscope." (Vaughan, 1997)
New York State Theater, New York, July 1999


On Thursday, July 22, 1999, I attended “Merce Cunningham in Conversation with Trisha Brown.” Brown informally discussed Cunningham’s work and facilitated questions from audience members. The conversation focused primarily on his use of Motion Capture™ in BIPED and the need for a ‘uncommon’dress rehearsal of the work.


At intermission, I attended a photographic exhibition of Cunningham’s work on the Mezzanine Level at the New York State Theater, sponsored by the Dance Collection, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

The performances I attended by the company were very informing and interesting. The opportunities I experienced as this study progressed greatly informed this study. As the study progressed, I obtained a behind the scenes look at Cunningham, his techniques, and dancers. This rich resource heightened the sophistication and validation of the study.
Element Three: Teaching Pedagogy


Burns had a lasting impression. I babysat for Louise Burns while she rehearsed the Ohio State University Dance Company (UDC). After rehearsal, Louise shared numerous stories of working, touring and dancing with Cunningham, most of them told leaning against her refrigerator, wearing beige Rockports™, and eating Haagen-Dazs coffee ice cream. I felt it was a wind-down time for her; I listened and found the stories fascinating. On one 'striking' occasion, I arrived to baby-sit and found a restaurant napkin scrunched up with a locomotor rhythmic pattern from that morning's class inscribed on it. She said in a commanding voice, "Here it is. Written down. Know it for tomorrow." and left quickly for rehearsal. My thought was, "These Cunningham folks are serious." My experience with Burns was significant toward my understanding of Cunningham's technique and choreography.

Approximately ten years later in 1996, my dance experience with Karen (Radford) Woods was quite different. Completing certification in Laban Movement Studies in 1994, I analyzed Cunningham's movement through a Laban framework. I used Laban's observation skills as the primary means of analyzing and performing Cunningham movement. Though Burns was an excellent dancer and teacher, I struggled in class with the movement. I did not have knowledge of Laban's work in 1987.

Woods' teaching style facilitated the use of Laban's approach in analyzing movement. She presented each exercise to the class through a physical demonstration, followed by a statement of movement objectives. The class tried out the exercises; and she provided comments. Her ability to articulate objectives in Cunningham's dance technique was helpful.
Harper was my third influential teacher in this study. In August of 1997, I traveled to New Smyrna Beach, Florida to participate in a one-week residency with Merce Cunningham, Meg Harper, and Elliot Caplan at the Atlantic Center for the Arts. I spent two hours in morning technique class with Harper and afternoon sessions in repertory and film with Cunningham and Caplan.

Emphasis was on the execution of the work to the fullest degree possible, and understanding the choreographic structure. We examined Cunningham's use of chance operations and learned an excerpt from *Fielding Sixes*. Harper required each dancer to have body strength, flexibility, and stamina. She required mental acuity in processing complex spatial patterns, and a technical background that supported this physical technique. In preparation of the residency, I worked in the weight room each day, and studied ballet and modern dance at Ohio State University. The residency was a competitive fellowship program; I was required to send a biography, videotape of my dancing, and a statement of why I was interested in the program. The last day of the residency, Harper said, "Sharon, you should think about bringing the kids to New York to perform at the studio. Your work with the kids is interesting."

Element Four: The dance created through Cunningham's techniques, *PLACE*. The stages of the work are discussed in the following chapter.

Summary

Four elements effected the data of this study: 1. The Cunningham Literature; 2. The Cunningham Dance Studio and Company Members; 3. Teaching Pedagogy; and 4. The dance work, *PLACE* created by the students and I over a two-year period. What became clear as the study progressed was the cyclical nature of learning and discovery and the usefulness of the Cunningham foundation, dancers, and studio teachers.
CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes a description of the sample, the setting for the research, the research strategies that embodied the findings, and the data collection process and qualitative techniques used to evaluate the data.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the techniques of Merce Cunningham with elementary school children through dance education. This study looked at the comprehension and understanding of twenty-five elementary school children, nineteen were girls utilizing the techniques developed by one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century, Merce Cunningham (b. 16 April 1919). The children were students enrolled in an alternative elementary school located in Columbus Ohio.

Action research was the mode of inquiry for this study and allowed the researcher to participate in an on-going spiral of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Using action research, the study sought to determine whether a greater degree of understanding and technical growth is achieved with the utilization of specific resources. I chose action research because it facilitated a critical evaluation of my teaching practice. Other forms of inquiry, including quantitative forms, could have been successfully implemented in this study. Qualitative action research closely resembled the choreographic process. A major data component in this study was a choreographed dance, titled \textit{PLACE}.
**Definition and Use of Action Research in the Study**

"Action research is a qualitative form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understandings of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out. The approach is action research when it is collaborative." (Stephen Kemmis & Robin McTaggart, *The Action Research Planner*, Australia: Deakin University, 1988, p.5)

Action research is accomplished through a spiral of four steps: 1) planning, 2) action and observation, 3) reflection, and 4) revision. In this study, action research allowed the participants (the students and the writer) to: organize our own environmental conditions, learn from our experiences, and to make the experience accessible to others. In this study, action research addressed two thematic questions: First, can children successfully learn, research and experience the work of Merce Cunningham in a meaningful and appropriate way?

Action research is participatory collaborative research. Though I initiated and executed the study, the input and influence of professional peers, and mentors were critical. In this study, initial participants (professional peers and mentors and I) discussed expectations and boundaries in children's dance, explored what others think about children's dance, and questioned what might be possible to accomplish.

In the discussions, my peers, mentors and I, identified a thematic concern regarding expectations and curricular objectives in this study. (Stephen Kemmis & Robin McTaggart, *The Action Research Planner*, Australia: Deakin University, 1988) Is it possible to develop in students a deeper and more informed understanding of technical growth and artistry through the techniques of Merce Cunningham? I posed that coaching movement through Laban Movement Analysis would strengthen children's ability to perform sophisticated movement, such as in the dance technique of Merce Cunningham.
Action research's primary purpose is to raise the problematic nature of a particular educational concern and not to suggest ways in which a problem should be addressed in the educational community. Action research differs from other forms of research methodologies primarily through specific observation strategies. In this study, Laban Movement Analysis was utilized as the primary means of assessing and documenting change. For example, observing photographs and videotapes of the Cunningham dancers were two predominant ways the dancer's and I witnessed Cunningham's techniques.

I was interested in exploring the ability of children to perform a dance in the sophisticated style of Merce Cunningham. What plays an 'essential' role in Cunningham's work? Could this be transmitted to young dancers, and if so, to what degree? I focused on my methodology and the six Cunningham techniques I chose to explore in this study: 1. Collaborations with John Cage and others, 2. Chance Operations, 3. Cunningham Dance Technique, 4. Events, 5. Technology and Video, and 6. LifeForms™/Motion Capture. As an action research study, numerous items (Cunningham's choreographic notebooks, video recordings, newspaper clippings, photographs, programs, recorded and handwritten interviews, letters and posters) were kept to record experiences and developments during the study. I found choreographic notes, interviews, photographs, and video recordings most useful and informative in accessing change.

Action research is a form of self-reflective inquiry which identified possibilities to the research question in this study: 1) Can children successfully learn, research, and experience the work of Merce Cunningham in a meaningful and appropriate way? (Catherine Marshall & Gretchen Rossman, Designing Qualitative Research, London: Sage Publications, 1994) An essential element in this study, was a fifty-five minute choreographic work created using the techniques of Merce Cunningham. Primarily structured through problem solving, I served as the facilitator and participated actively in the research of Cunningham's techniques and our choreographic process. The choreographic work and data emerged as a result of a collective collaboration.
In this project, my four objectives were (1) to improve what is taking place in the elementary dance class, and; (2) to act, implement and plan efficiently. In addition, (3) to observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurred (readings, journals, video recordings, interviews, photographs), and (4) to reflect on these effects as a basis for further planning and improved teaching practices. (Stephen Kemmis & Robin McTaggart, *The Action Research Planner*, Australia: Deakin University, 1988)

I was interested in using the techniques of Merce Cunningham in my teaching and choreographic practices. Action research allowed for planning, acting, observing and reflecting more carefully, more systematically, and more rigorously than other research methodologies. In examining elementary children's dance and choreography, action research was complimentary to the process, and helped establish a flexible environment.

I will describe the four-step spiral implemented in this study. This plan included:

1. The Planning Stage included the following steps; a) reading literature addressing Merce Cunningham, b) perspectives on Irmgard Bartenieff's Fundamentals, c) basic concepts of Laban Movement Analysis, d) perspectives on Howard Gardner's bodily-kinesthetic intelligence and e) somatics, f) creativity, g) the role of the environment in a learning environment, h) movement experiences in the Cunningham dance technique, i) action research methodology and planning a methodological approach to inquiry.

2. The Action Stage included lesson plans, compositional and choreographic material. My action was deliberate and was critically informed through the integration of the readings and movement experiences. The action was recognized as practice of 'ideas-in-action' and used action as a platform for the further development of later action. The lesson plans for action had a tentative and provisional quality; and were flexible and open to change of foreseen and unforeseen circumstances. The action was fluid and dynamic, and required spontaneous decisions about what was to be done, in addition to the exercise of practical judgment.
3. The Observation Stage was accomplished through journals, videotapes, interviews, photographs and video recordings, and;

4. The Reflection Stage addressed areas in need of additional inquiry and exploration. I then repeated the action research spiral numerous times. (Stephen Kemmis & Robin McTaggart, The Action Research Planner, Australia: Deakin University, 1988)

Physical Site and Facilities

The target school, Douglas Alternative Elementary School, is located in Columbus, Ohio. Douglas Alternative Elementary School integrates multi-age groupings, open-space, whole language learning, and the assertive discipline techniques of William Glasser. Textbooks are not used at the school; Units are planned and executed through in-depth team planning, field trips, and ‘webbings’. Numerous programs support the school core program such as Chapter One Reading, Individual Education Plans (IEP’s), and pull-out groups for the gifted learners in academic areas and the arts. From 1992-1997, Douglas Alternative Elementary School was a venture capital school and received extensive funding to purchase seventy Macintosh computers and supportive software packages for the building. Narrative portfolio assessment is employed in assessing the students’ development and progress. The school is considered primarily a multiple intelligence school with technology facilitating academic and artistic work in the building.

The school is tailored to meet the needs of children and staff, as is the academic program. In an effort to create a learning environment that is relevant for the students, the curriculum is designed to emphasize the multiple intelligences and diversity in learning styles and strategies. The teachers and staff are encouraged to teach and learn through styles and strategies that foster each student’s unique approach to learning academically, socially, and emotionally.

Douglas Alternative Elementary School focuses on cooperative learning experiences and shared decision-making in the classroom and in staff meetings. In working this way,
conflicts do arise. Carried over from the William Glasser philosophy in 1973, the behavioral approach is implemented in conflict management and resolution.

The physical structure of Douglas Alternative Elementary School is non-traditional. Originally designed in 1976 by Kay Noble (principal from 1976-1995) as a 'literature-based' elementary school, the architectural and academic center of the building is the library media center centrally located on the main floor and easily accessible to all learning communities. On the north side of the library media center and one floor above, are two intermediate learning communities, grades three through five.

Just beneath the intermediate learning communities are two primary learning communities (grade kindergarten through second). In addition, there are two self-contained classrooms, originally designed for a community 'Headstart' pre-kindergarten program. These classrooms currently house two kindergarten-first grade classrooms. The nurse, counselor, and principal offices are located off the main entrance corridor on the west side of the library media center. On the same level, are the movement education (dance), visual and musical arts (general and instrumental music) facilities.

Sample Selection

The research sample used in this study comprises twenty five elementary school students from the third, fourth and fifth grades at Douglas Alternative Elementary School. The choreographic component of the study began September 3, 1996 and concluded April 24, 1998. An additional year of inquiry and research occurred from 1998-1999. The students were selected based on their interest and desire to work on a long-range dance project. The intellectual and movement abilities of the sample varied, which was acceptable. This study was an investigation of children's dance and the techniques of Merce Cunningham, not natural movement efficiency, talent or traditional measures of intelligence.
Identification of My Biases and Ideology

As a qualitative researcher, I accepted that the research in this study was ideologically driven. This study, as are all studies, was not value-free or bias-free. My biases were as follows: 1. Laban Movement Analysis is a useful component of the learning process; 2. All teachers and students must have opportunities to express themselves creatively for personal growth and development; 3. All students learn differently; therefore, a diverse set of learning styles and strategies must be implemented in the school; 4. Teachers must implement a diverse set of teaching styles and strategies to accommodate all students, and 5. Researching and studying prominent figures in dance is appropriate curricula for elementary dance education.

Triangulation

In this study, several forms of triangulation were utilized. I incorporated data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation, and interdisciplinary triangulation. Action research triangulates data from three perspectives, 1. the teacher's perspective, 2. the perspective of the individual student, and 3. the perspective of a third party (peers, colleagues, and parents). Triangulation was an important method for comparing and contrasting different accounts of the same situation in this study. Contradictions and discrepancies emerged during the study, which helped interpret situations and develop the study's theory.

Credibility

This study encompassed components drawing from personal experience centered on 'artistically-oriented' qualitative research design and evaluation. The students and I investigated the techniques of Merce Cunningham, which resulted in a piece of choreography. In education and the arts we often describe, evaluate, interpret and evaluate; judgments were based on standards. I collected data that served as evidence and used structural collaboration, conceptual validation, and referential adequacy.
Timeline for the Study

The exploration of the techniques of Cunningham began September 3, 1996 and continued through April 24, 1998. Additional research, reflection, and evaluation of the data occurred until December of 1999.

Limits of the Study

Despite the fact that I identified the population sample as a limitation on page six, I came to realize that there were additional limitations which emerged. I didn’t have a great deal of reflective time ‘on-site’ following the four-day trip to the Cunningham Studio in New York City in April of 1998. Change in the school schedule, winter illness, and standardized tests interrupted the study significantly in February and March of 1997 and 1998. In addition, I transferred to Woodward Park Middle School to serve as their first dance teacher the following academic year, September 1998- June 1999.

Collection of Data

The collection of data was completed in August of 1999. The data gathering was completed through literature about Cunningham’s techniques, interviews, written reflections, letters, video recordings, photographs, performances, and experiences in the techniques of Merce Cunningham. Brainstorming with professional peers and mentors, the rehearsal process and final performance framed the data. The data gathering process was unique in this study. Through Laban Movement Analysis, I was able to examine specific aspects of choreographic phrases and movement clarity, intent, and efficiency. The use of Laban Movement Analysis facilitated the evaluation of the choreographic accomplishments of PLACE, in addition to knowing as a researcher and educator.
Experiencing and Teaching in the Cunningham Style

I have chosen to analyze the performances on April 23 and April 24, 1998 of PLACE (1998) at the Cunningham Dance Studio in New York City. The following nine sections are analyzed: opening arm phrase, triplets, Jillian’s and Lillie’s duet, boys dice, boys shapes, sixes triplets, &1 Thematic Phrase, Leg Phrase, and partner yoga duet. I was particularly interested in the degree the dancers’ performed the movement. I critiqued the work through a Laban Movement Analysis framework.

Opening Arm Phrase: The dance began with an opening arm phrase that I learned from Karen (Radford) Woods in June of 1996. I was curious to see if elementary students could successfully initiate the arm movement from their backs. There was varying success with this movement exploration. What I observed was the importance of the first opening movement of the dance, as it set the attention factor toward the work. The opening arm exercise allowed the students to ‘be’ in their space, and to focus on their sense of ensemble. The opening arm exercise was repeated five times, and accumulated dancers at the beginning of each repetition.

The opening arm exercise is a traditional Cunningham dance technique exercise used to open and widen the back. When I began my exploration of Cunningham's work with the students, I was initially interested in exploring the range of articulation the students could achieve in their movement. My knowledge base in the Cunningham work in the fall of 1996 was limited. The ‘big’ Cunningham techniques such as back exercises and rhythm, and use of space dominated my initial movement and choreographic explorations. As the study progressed, my depth of knowledge and exposure to Cunningham’s work increased, as did the sophistication of the exploration and techniques of Merce Cunningham.

Triplets: A staple of locomotor movement in the Cunningham dance technique is the ‘modern dance triplet.’ The Cunningham modern dance triplet was most likely mutated from Cunningham’s work with Martha Graham. Many classroom exercises and choreographic works contain triplets. Triplets, if executed correctly, are difficult. Immediately following
the opening arm phrases there are triplets. The triplets advance (travel forward) and retreat (travel backward), and include changes in direction. At first, the dancers were unable to maintain a ‘group rhythm’ and struggled with the concept of ensemble movement. This concept varied from traditional creative dance experiences, which discourage uniformity, and encourage individuality. At the beginning of the study, I focused on ensemble movement, working together, and dancing as a unit.

**Lillian’s and Lillie’s Duet:** This duet was the first use of chance procedures within a movement phrase. I asked the dancers to look at pictures in the Cunningham books. I asked them to choose twelve shapes and to connect them through a chance operation. I asked them to first choose the shapes from pictures. The dancers wrote the name of each shape on blank playing cards, and shuffled the twelve cards and drew a random sequence of movement. Though each dancer chooses the same shapes, their phrases were different due to chance operations.

**Boys’ Dice:** The dice section occurred approximately five minutes into the piece, and included sections of movement that were set and spontaneous. Each boy had a 3” x 3” foam die numbered on each side, one to six. They began their ‘dice’ section by running into the performance space and freezing. The freeze allowed the viewer to establish a change-of-idea in the work. After a momentary pause, the boys threw their die into the air and verbally ‘called out’ the number that faced the ceiling as the die settled on the floor. The results were always different due to chance. After a set number of tosses, the boys began to translate their numbers into movement. Next, the boys took the idea of chance operations to a higher degree. Each number had a corresponding movement. At the end of this section, the boys lined up center stage and performed the movement sequence one through six in chronological order.

This section was very interesting to watch, and served as an excellent example of chance operations. The boys took pride in performing this section in the dance. The dancers that observed from off-stage were always interested in seeing ‘what was going to happen this time.’ The uncertainty was exciting and kept the dancers and viewers attention. In one
performance, all of the boys threw the same number three times. The audience gasped. The dancers' eyes 'lit up' in amazement during the performance. Following the performance, we discussed the 'chance' of it happening again.

**Boys' Shapes:** The boys' shapes are taken from photographs of Cunningham's choreographic works, *Trackers,* and *Rainforest.* This was our first 'weight-bearing' partnering section in the dance. It was challenging and interesting to watch in a performance setting. As an ensemble we discussed the two works and re-created numerous tableaux's from the pieces with the boys.

**Sixes Triplets:** This section is modeled after the basic rhythmic structure of six in *Fielding Sixes.* I pointed each dancer to one of four walls, gave each a number to start movement, and created an example of 'organized chaos.' It was a clear example of the 'inner workings' of a Swiss watch, precise, clear, and systematic.

**&1 Thematic Phrase:** This eight-count phrase was created from pictures in the Cunningham literature. The order was determined through a chance operation. Within this section was several orderings of the movement, a clear example of the magnitude possibilities with an identical chance operation.

**Leg Phrase:** The leg phrase is a Cunningham warm-up exercise I learned as an undergraduate from Eva Powers, current chair of the Department of Dance at Wayne State University in Detroit. The exercise, with three variations, emphasizes accent, and articulation of the lower leg and foot.

**Partner Yoga:** I added a large yoga section the second year. In the summer of 1997, I participated in a yoga class with Susan Van Pelt at Ohio State University. As discussed in the literature, Cunningham practices yoga daily. As part of our study of Cunningham, we practiced various yoga postures and incorporated them into our dance. The yoga section became a highlight of the dance. We, the dancers and I, reached a greater level of concentration and commitment toward movement from our experiences in yoga study. What
is of particular acknowledgement; all of the dancers’ performing a sustained ‘inverted tripod headstand’ in unison.

Observations and Results of the Performances

There were five public performances of PLACE from 1996-1998. Each performance was an extension of the performance that preceded the last. As the study progressed, the depth of understanding of Cunningham’s techniques and the technical development of the dancers increased. The plan of traveling to New York City to perform at the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio motivated the dancers to concentrate and work cooperatively. Each performance brought additional audience members. As the study progressed, many attended the concerts out of curiosity. An interesting component of the study was the degree of interest it created for others. The community, parents, colleagues, and friends of the dancers became interested in Cunningham’s work. As the study progressed, parents and friends asked to observe our rehearsals at school, and desired dialogue with me after practices and performances. Many began to acknowledge and clip articles addressing Cunningham’s work out of newspapers such as The New York Times, and Village Voice. As the project intensified, discussions arose questioning common practices and objectives in dance education, often leading to dialogue about education, in general.

The five public performances are presented in the following section. The first performance occurred on November 17, 1996. The final performance took place on April 25, 1998.

TAPS, Columbus, Ohio, November 17, 1996

The first performance of PLACE occurred on Friday, November 17, 1996 at the Third Avenue Performance Space (TAPS) in Columbus, Ohio. The first performance of PLACE was twelve minutes long and presented as the closing work in the Columbus Youth Dance Ensemble’s (a middle school dance ensemble I directed for two years) fall performance offerings. The dancers that performed in PLACE were Douglas Alternative Elementary School
students. The choreographic structure and emphasis of the work focused on shapes taken from Cunningham photographs, triplets, and chance operations. Karen (Radford) Woods and Vera Blaine (Professor Emeritus, Past Chair, Department of Dance, Ohio State University) attended this performance and provided comments.

TAPS, Columbus, Ohio, April 16, 1998

On Wednesday, April 16, 1997, (Merce Cunningham's 79th birthday) I presented a lecture on Merce Cunningham and his work before a performance of PLACE (1997) at TAPS. Now twenty-four minutes long, the choreographic work focused on shapes, rhythm, movement intention, and the use of space. I planned for this performance to be the conclusion of the study of Merce Cunningham. Immediately following the performance, I received a great deal of encouragement to continue the project into a second year. I had mixed feelings about further expanding the project. When is too much, too much for young dancers? I was uncertain of where the work would take me, but I trusted my intuition and the on-going interest the dancers demonstrated toward working in this way. In preparation of our performance, Karen (Radford) Woods visited our school and watched a run-through of the piece. She offered comments and suggestions for the performers and I. She answered the student's questions about dancing for Merce Cunningham as a scholarship student, understudy, and company member.

I attended a fellowship arts residency with Merce Cunningham, Meg Harper, and Elliot Caplan in August of 1997 at the Atlantic Center for the Arts in Florida. I decided to continue the project due to Meg Harper's encouragement at the residency, my personal experiences 'revisiting' Cunningham's work at the residency and the resources that became available to me during and after the residency. At the residency, I experienced Cunningham material that was new and interesting. I learned an excerpt from Cunningham's Fielding Sixes. Harper showed and discussed various chance procedures Cunningham uses in his work.
On Monday, January 6th, 1998, I traveled with the students to the Department of Dance at Ohio State University to perform PLACE for lecturer Candace Feck and her Dance 161, class. Feck's class experienced an overview of Cunningham's work earlier in the week. Our performance demonstrated Cunningham's techniques, especially chance operations and collaboration. The dancers performed the piece, now forty-five minutes in length, and answered questions from the undergraduate college students immediately following the performance in an informal setting. Candace Feck played a major role in this study, the dancers performed for her classes several times over a one-year period. Her comments were helpful and encouraging toward the students and I. Feck served a significant role in providing a formal university performance setting to show the work, in addition to validating the work to the dancers parents and Columbus Public Schools personnel (administrators, teachers, peers).

On Friday, January 10th, the dancers to perform PLACE (1998) in Sullivant Theater at Ohio State University. The theater was filled to capacity, three hundred and nineteen audience members. Initially scheduled to perform at the Third Avenue Performance Space, we were advised the building was not heating properly and was hazardous. This was the last performance with children only. As noted in Chapter 1, I added seven Ohio State University Department of Dance majors and one department alumnae. I made this change in hope that it would serve as a mentoring experience for the elementary aged dancers. Most importantly, I discovered children rehearse and perform differently than young adults (dance majors). Children play, young adults work. The children had a greater sense of freedom and took risks in their movement. The young adults were controlled and did not take risks as often. The element of spontaneity was exciting to the elementary students, alarming to the young adults. The young adults demonstrated a great degree of vulnerability in the rehearsal process. They
were uncomfortable making mistakes and at times directed responsibility of errors toward the children.

**Ohio State University, Ohio, April, 1998**

On Tuesday, April 21st, 1998, a day before our departure to New York City, the dancers performed in Sullivant Theater at Ohio State University. The final Columbus performance provided a culminating experience of the ‘finished product’ for those not traveling to New York City. It provided a means for running the show in order, including the three solos (unrelated to this study) performed by Stacy Reischman, which preceded *PLACE* (1998) and served as the first half of the concert offerings at the Cunningham Studio. Karen (Radford) Woods attended a rehearsal in March of 1998, which thrilled the students and dancers from Ohio State University.

This study provided a venue for demonstrating to the students, parents, peers, and community the possibilities that can successfully be achieved with young students. In addition, the study demonstrated the depth of commitment that many individuals had to the study. The dancers, the parents and business community supported this study. The parents assisted with extensive fundraising ($16,000 dollars) to travel and perform in NYC, backstage support during performances, ushering and box office, in addition to arranging schedules to attend rehearsals at the school two evenings a week the second year of the study.

The media attention included a television feature story by news anchor Deborah Countiss on WSYX Channel 6 News on Monday, February 6, 1998. This highlight brought individuals in the community and surrounding schools to the performance out of curiosity. I received WSYX’s ‘Person of the Week’ honor that week. Countiss and her crew visited our school during an evening rehearsal and interviewed Karen Bell (Chair, representing the Department of Dance, Ohio State University), the dancers and I. The business community, especially ElectroCopy, offered a substantial discount on the printing of concert posters, programs and publicity flyers. An additional feature story was written by school reporter, Ruth Sternberg, for the Columbus Dispatch on January 10th, 1999, which brought additional
audience members to the concert and further validated the significance of the students accomplishments with Cunningham's techniques.

**Merce Cunningham Studio, New York City, April 1998**

The performance at the Merce Cunningham Studio occurred April 24-25, 1998. As I observe the photographs and videotapes from the trip, I can easily see the growth and depth the young performers achieved through Cunningham's techniques. Particularly memorable was our technical rehearsal with Cunningham Dance Studio's house manager and technical director, John Musall. We arrived at the Cunningham studio on Thursday evening at 8:30 p.m. Before our arrival Mr. Musall had expressed his issue with children performing in the studio, and expressed concern regarding the level of work that would be presented in the concert. We were the first group of children to rent and perform in the Cunningham Studio. During a telephone conversation, he reminded me of the 'professional level' work presented at the studio. Musall was initially informed of my intentions to bring young dancers to the studio when journalist Sternberg called the studio in January to discuss the upcoming performance at the studio in April.

I vividly remember our arrival at the studio. We left the hotel, The New York Athletic Club, on our large fifty-five-passenger bus. I encouraged the parents to go 'out on the town' and let me take the dancers to the dress rehearsal. I did this for one reason: control. The parents that traveled with us were quite excited about the performances at the Cunningham Studio and the four-day trip to New York City. I felt the students would be focused and on-task if parent did not attend and sit and chat during our run through of the dance. I never expressed my rationale, nor did it ever come up in a discussion with parents or performers. The parents were very proud, enthusiastic, and excited about their dancers accomplishments.

Before we left the bus to walk into the Westbeth Building (the Cunningham Studio is on the top floor, eleventh floor), I instructed the dancers to quietly walk into the building and remove their shoes as we arrived in the lobby of the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio. As I
wished, the dancers entered quietly and removed their shoes. I asked them to sit in the lobby while I looked for Musall. Upon locating Musall, he asked that I bring the children into the lobby to share ‘the rules’. I took him to the lobby and said, “Look.” He slowly opened the door and said, “Oh, my God... they are already amazing.” As he opened the door slowly, twenty-five sets of eyes stared at him. Not a sound. Full attention. The students were thrilled to finally be in the Cunningham studio in New York City.

We started the dress rehearsal at 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 23rd. Reischman arrived a day earlier and ran a dress rehearsal for her three solos. When we started our run of the piece, it was unusually quiet. Of course, I could hear the music and the dancers breathing, but I heard nor visually seen any talking or chatter from the Cunningham tech team. Approximately ten minutes into the piece, I said to Musall in a nervous voice, “Do you like this?” He responded, “Sharon, this is absolutely amazing. Oh my God, are you serious? I never thought kids could do this?” I asked him what he meant by this. His response, “This looks like something Merce would make.” After the run he said, “Sharon, I had no idea you were bringing something of this quality. Kids doing Merce. I love it.”

David Covey, associate professor of Dance at Ohio State University (on sabbatical leave of absence), and technical director for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company from 1996-1998, attended the Friday evening performance at the Cunningham Studio. His response was “Merce should see this. I will tell him to come tomorrow.” Mr. Covey was kind and spoke to the dancers immediately following the performance on Friday, April 24, 1999. He shared his appreciation for the level of artistry the dancers achieved and their understanding of the techniques of Merce Cunningham.

Though Cunningham did not attend the following evening, he did talk highly of the children’s accomplishments with his colleagues at the studio. When I returned to the Cunningham Foundation to complete research in the archives in August of 1998, many Cunningham affiliates (company dancers, teaching, and support staff) approached me and said, “I heard your kids were amazing. Merce was talking about it” “How did you get them to
work that way? I told them I approached Merce Cunningham's techniques through a historical, practical approach. I accomplished this through observation of Cunningham work on video and in performance, experientially in technique classes (mainly the technique classes at the Cunningham Studio, Woods at Ohio State University, and with Harper at the Atlantic Center for the Arts Fellowship Arts Residency in Florida.) I shared the depth of information I obtained from the expansive literature review addressing Cunningham's work and his distinctive aesthetic.

Summary and Relevance of the Data

The first four chapters provided the following: overview of the research, review of the literature and the experiences and understanding of Cunningham. My challenge in preparing the first four chapters was to build a logical connection between the purpose of the study, the depth and nature of the problem, the experiential design, and the identification of the setting. The data asks us to question 'common practices' in dance education. The data implies the importance of dance history and the incorporation of prominent artists in the dance curriculum. The data implies the importance of validation, through performance, in dance education. The performances of \textit{PLACE} are examples of the development and depth this study accomplished. Additional materials related to this chapter are located in Appendix A, Appendix C and Appendix D of this dissertation.
CHAPTER 5
RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this final chapter, the statement of the problem, first introduced in Chapter 1, is re-examined. The purpose of the study was to explore the techniques of Merce Cunningham with elementary school children. This study examined the students' ability to understand and communicate the 'essence' of Merce Cunningham's distinctive use of collaboration, chance operations, movement style, and technology. This study recognized the significance of the Cunningham Foundation and Merce Cunningham Dance Company. This chapter includes implications for further research, teaching, dance education, and 'elevating' the aesthetic and movement possibilities in children's dance.

Children's Dance and Merce Cunningham

How can children successfully learn, research, and experience the work of Merce Cunningham in an appropriate way? Children can successfully learn, research, and experience the work of Merce Cunningham through reading, observation, movement exploration, and performance. This study was large due, in part, to the inclusion of the literature by and about Merce Cunningham. His longevity as an artist, the books, periodicals, videos, and archival collection which covers over fifty years of creative work provided insight and opportunities beyond the physical dance experience.

The literature was a rich teaching resource in this study. The reading materials were easily modified for the elementary students. The literature provided verbal descriptions of Cunningham's work, which required the students to use their visualization skills and imagination. The literature also provided a validation for the study, by showing the students
that many individuals have written books about Cunningham and consider his contributions important. The students enjoyed looking through the books. They often commented on the 'timeless' nature in Cunningham's work. They stated that pieces that were done in the 1960's could be performed today and look new and innovative due to chance operations.

Cunningham's work, on video and in performance, was a rich resource in this study. During the study we observed and discussed several Cunningham documentaries and dance works. The videos provided a means of looking into Cunningham's world as an artist. Often, Cunningham introduced the dance works. As part of the introduction, he discussed his creative process, techniques, and use of collaboration for each piece. We often discussed each dance as it was presented. Though this was not my personal preference, the students desired immediate dialogue.

The videos inspired the dancers to write letters to Merce Cunningham and Karen (Radford) Woods. The letters and questions to Cunningham focused on his choreographic procedures and work. The correspondence to Woods focused on her experiences as a dancer in the company. Woods visited our school a week after receiving the letters, discussed her experiences with Cunningham, and answered questions. Woods visited our school on several occasions and share her experiences working with Cunningham and in the dance company. We took a couple of pictures of the dancers with Woods. Picture all of the students sitting and smiling for the camera. Now picture Hari, exhibiting a lovely set of horns behind Carleigh's head. The students feel totally in love with Karen. She was the closest thing to getting to Cunningham. They asked question about rehearsals and performances. The students and I attended a performance of the company in Pittsburgh, PA. We attended the post-performance discussion and heard Cunningham discuss the work he presented and his current projects. One student had the opportunity to ask Cunningham a question. He asked, "Do you ever get tired of practicing your dance?"

Movement exploration provided a methodology to explore Cunningham's techniques. It was an evaluation tool in this study. The work sessions, lecture demonstrations, and
performances provided a means of evaluating the elementary students depth and understanding of Cunningham's techniques. The performances provided frameworks for the students and I to discuss Cunningham's techniques. The performances provided a formal setting and an opportunity for professionals and individuals familiar with his work, to comment on the study. Immediate feedback was most successful with David Covey, lighting designer for the company, at the Cunningham Studio. The performances provided a reward and form of validation for the study. The performances enhanced the students self esteem concentration and risk-taking skills. Also, I noticed heightened movement efficiency, physical fitness and stamina that may be due, in part, to the three somatic forms (yoga, Bartenieff Fundamentals®, and Laban Movement Analysis integrated into this study.

During the April performance at TAPS, I directed a pre-concert run of the piece. They were nervous about performing outside of the building. The dancers took this performance very seriously. John Bohuslawsky was our technical director and stage manager. Bill Walker served as the sound and additional tech helper. The audience at our April performance was a near sell out, a rare occurrence for a dance performance by public school students. This performance was a bit different from the usual performance at TAPS. I could not simply start the music and have the dancers dance. The audience needed a preparation, introduction, and explanation of what we were going to do. I accomplished this through an informal slide and video presentation of Cunningham's techniques. The students also participated in the preliminary pre-dance introduction.

This study included an unexpected broken foot. One of the boys broke his foot during a soccer game the day before we left for NYC. There were issues, he worked on the dance for two years and was determined to dance. He is a highly gifted student and had great difficulty dealing with his injury. His father is a prominent child psychologist, so I allowed him to coach me on this sensitive matter. Another interesting outcome, Hari Luke. He was expelled from his previous school for punching his principal and was eager to participate in the second year of the project. He was a transfer student and initially out-of-control. I told him, "When
you get it together in the regular class, we will talk." He got it together and ended up becoming 'the star' of the piece. Though individuality is underplayed and not a focus of the Cunningham's aesthetic, his outstanding talents were hard to blend with the others. He was simply outstanding. This is the only area Hari excelled in school. He was considered academically low, which I questioned as this study progressed.

At the time of the study, I did not realize the accomplishments of the study, because I was too busy looking for things to explore and fix. I did not fully realize the accomplishments of the students until the study was over and I had transferred to a middle school the following September. What I experienced, at the time of the study, was my normal expectation with the students.

The dancers demonstrated great connectivity possible due to the way I work with the students through Bartenieff Fundamentals®. I integrated yoga because Cunningham practices yoga each day. The score was Cage music or accompaniment in this specific style. During the rehearsal of the yoga section, the boys began building structures off-stage. I recommended they bring the idea onstage and turn it into a chance procedure that happened spontaneously. So, one of the boys tossed pennies. The number of heads dictated the number of dice to bring into the space to build the structure. It was always different, and of particular interest to the audience.

The integration of the Ohio State dancers resulted in interesting findings. One of the major differences between the dance majors and the students was how they rehearsed. The students played, the dancers worked. I had people mad at me most every rehearsal, because I did not operate the rehearsal in a way they wanted it to go. Joy Havens (Ohio State dancer) performed a solo triplet phrase in the piece. It was a beautiful demonstration of Cunningham triplets with variations. The Ohio State dancers also demonstrated several tableauxs from Cunningham photos. This served two purposes: a starting point for the dance majors and a demonstration of a similar idea performed by the students. Reischman performed a LifeForms™ phrase created by the students, which was expanded into a quartet for the Ohio
State University dancers to perform. The dancers were responsible for teaching the phrases to the university students.

Some changes needed to occur before our April performance at Sullivant Hall. They were running around the room, loud and quite excited about the trip to NYC the following day. They had to lie on the floor and close their eyes. We were normal kids before our performance at the Cunningham Studio. I allowed the dancers to sit as audience members and observe Reischman's solo. They wore fake Oakley glasses and various treasures accumulated during their adventures around NYC. We had an extended intermission to allow the dancers time to change for their dance.

What I did in this study was challenge what young people could accomplish in the arts, in this case elementary dance education. I have always had high expectations with my students. This study demanded a very high technical level rarely, if ever, found in children's dance. With the children attaining this technical level, I am hopeful that others will look at their approach and how similar disciplines are taught and perhaps know that there are new levels that many children will work hard to achieve.

The children became very informed of Cunningham's work and modern dance during this study. The parents began to attend rehearsals and wrote notes to me suggesting changes in the dance. I took this very seriously because when I first started the project, very few knew whom Cunningham was. When I began reworking the piece, several parents were angry with me. I could not have everyone on the stage space the entire time. I also had eight new dancers to work into the piece, and new sections of movement. If I said 'this group does this and only three of you can do this part', anger arose. It was not about ability; it was about the choreographic process.

Our piece PLACE is not to be confused with Cunningham's work of the same name. I used the idea of chance operations and set up the piece as an Event. We did not perform excerpts of pieces that would traditionally be performed in a Cunningham Event. We performed exercises, or things we discovered, created, and performed them randomly through
chance operations. We integrated LifeForms™, die, cards, paper scrapes. The study became more than an exploration of time and space. The study began to inform itself and evolve. The children were wonderful and taught me a great deal. This study is the children’s story. I feel a tremendous responsibility to the children. It is my responsibility to share their accomplishment and story.

The video recordings of the piece served as excellent examples of the students accomplishments. In addition to the pictures, it provided a clear demonstration of the students accomplishments in the study. The final work was fifty-five minutes long, which is very long. My thought was this is for the children and about children, not my personal, or the audience’s aesthetic preference. We raised $16,000 to travel to NYC to ‘dance’. We danced. We stayed at the New York Athletic Club. I took several parents and teachers as chaperones. We toured the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, China Town, Battery Park, the Empire State Building, Italian Village, SoHo, and the 5th Avenue strip in Manhattan. The classroom teachers taught units on our sightseeing points before our departure. We were prepared to go the NYC.

Did Cunningham attend the performance? No. How did the students respond toward his absence at the Cunningham Studio? It created an issue for me to address as a teacher with the parents and dancers. Sometimes individuals place Cunningham in a ‘God-like’ unrealistic place and fail to see him as a human being that is eighty years old. They did see and talk with him in Pittsburgh, PA. Cunningham received the students letters and a video of the performance.

In making choices in curricula in education, we often give up something to gain something else. What were the loses in working intensively through the techniques of Merce Cunningham? I lost my lunch and preparation time for rehearsals during the students daily recess. This study was not disruptive to the dance curriculum, which was already in place in the district. The students received their usual creative dance class through the year with their class. It was an additional dance experience for the dancers.

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The trip to NYC was a highlight of the study. I began teaching all of the students in this study as kindergartners. In most cases, I taught each student an average of four to six years before they entered the study. They were familiar with my teaching style. I had familiarity with elementary level students, and had organized similar year-long dances. The administration, students, and parents trusted me as a teacher. The district dance curriculum is based in creative movement, motif writing, folk dance, and basic choreographic structures. The students had a broad overview of dance which facilitated this study.

The techniques of Cunningham did not drive my curriculum for two years with my classes, though I did introduce chance procedures with all of the students at various levels. I thought it would be beneficial. The dancers that participated in the study often performed for their classmates. I was very interested in sharing the students process and accomplishments with the teachers and students in the school. Showing how the piece evolved was important, this idea was carried over from our creative dance classes and included discussion and dialogue. I do not believe I gave up anything in this study. Maybe someday, I will acknowledge something. What I feel now is that the students do not recognize the magnitude of their accomplishments. The dancers are young children, and I am hoping that this study developed an appreciation for dance for themselves and their families. They are children. I always made sure I met their needs and they enjoyed 'simply' dancing.

Was my approach appropriate for this age group? At first, I was interested in exploring simple concepts of time and space. The study was performance oriented, child centered and appropriate for young dancers. The study kept extending and informing itself. The process and work directed my exploration. It was either people encouraging me to question something else or the dancers finding new ideas. The resources in this study were phenomenal. I had the Ohio State Dance Department, fine dancers, and faculty members that danced for Cunningham. In NYC, I interviewed several dancers: Louise Burns, Meg Harper, and Robert Swinston. This study allowed me to reinvent my teaching approach and try something new.
with the students. At times, somethings were not possible; we learned something possibly of
greater significance consequently.

Reflections and Evaluation

Why did I begin this study? I began this study because I was told what I wanted to
accomplish with my students was not possible. I realized that if Woods had said my
objectives were possible, I would have simply got into my car that day and drove home.
Because she said it was not possible, I was determined to demonstrate, in fact, that the
students could perform a dance in a style that an observer would identify as “Cunningham-
based.” At the beginning of the study all of the third, fourth and fifth grade students were
asked if they would like to participate in a yearlong dance. I was very interested in sharing
with the students what I had learned in Woods’ class, especially the concept of an Event.

What I did initially with the students was discuss Cunningham’s theory, fundamental movement ideas, and chance procedures. They enjoyed creating and performing chance operations, which was similar to play. I questioned if the students could embody the elements of the Cunningham style, which is primarily about the use of time (sustained and quick) and space (direct, and indirect). If I am a half-decent movement analyst, what can I do with the students?

I expressed to the students I was interested in exploring the techniques of Merce
Cunningham. Since this was an ‘in-house’ project, there was no discussion of extra
performances outside of the school building. As the study progressed, I felt we were
accomplishing something unique. We performed our first version of PLACE three months into
the project, as part of a performance I choreographed for middle school dance students. The
concert was a bit short, so I added the work. It was an opportunity for the dancers to share
their work and to build a larger audience for the middle school group. At that time, we had
completed twelve minutes of the dance. One of my goals as a dance educator is to get dance
students into a performance space. I had many people that help me with this in terms of
affordability and support. Amazingly, I have no budget and paid for all of the performances. I feel performing in a theatre is an important aspect of dance education, too important to forsake for financial reasons.

I thought we were done with the piece after the November TAPS concert. After the performance several people approached me and suggested I expand the project. They felt further exploration of Cunningham’s techniques could result in something significant. Their response was interesting, but the piece was already long for elementary dance. We performed a twenty-four minute version in April of 1997. In time, I realized the length was of no importance. The performance met the needs of the children and allowed them time to experience the ‘evolving nature’ of the dance. At this point, I thought we were done with the study. Individuals recommended I further expand the study. I knew that if I expanded the study, it needed to be new and different. A year, and a specific topic, was a long time to maintain interest with elementary school children. What could I do with this challenge?

The second year of the study I added dancers from Ohio State University. I wanted to create an incorporation of a mentoring aspect into the process. This gave the elementary students an opportunity to work with dance majors and ended up being a very positive experience for the students. It also helped facilitate performances in the dance department theater. I also integrated several experts in the dance department to assist in ‘getting the word’ out about Cunningham and his work with my parents. Candace Feck provided an overview of Cunningham’s work before the performance for the audience members in April of 1998, which was very successful.

Some things that occurred during this study were amazing. In August of 1997, Harper recommended that I bring the students to the Cunningham Studio in NYC to perform. I thought that would be fun. In September, I asked the students if they wanted to continue the project into a second year and travel to NYC to perform. They all agreed to continue with a final performance at the Cunningham Studio. Soon after announcing our intentions, I realized it was going to cost us $16,000 to accomplish our goal. I could not tell a young student that we are
going to do something, and then back out because of money, so we go. We did extensive fundraising in the second year of the study. Parents began to fall into 'jobs' and assume ownership of their piece of the project. It resulted in a huge project, that in and of itself became a collaboration with many people that was very big, and a large financial risk.

In time, the parents took an interest in Cunningham's work. When I began this study, I mentioned my desire to create a dance based on the techniques of Merce Cunningham with their children. Most did not know of Cunningham or his work. One parent, who is familiar with his aesthetic, thought I was working toward the technical level of the professional company. Though technical ability was not a goal, the dancers did achieve a high level in this study. Primarily, I explored choreographic techniques and movement invention. As the study progressed, the parents began to take an 'informed' interest in Cunningham's techniques, in addition to how I rehearsed the dancers. Some attended rehearsals and attempted to read a newspaper. When I looked over toward them, their eyes usually hovered over the top of the paper towards the dancers.

The public school administration was pleased with the positive publicity the study received. Our study was featured on WSYX channel six television and in The Columbus Dispatch as feature stories (See APPENDIX A, page 99). This study provided an example of good things taking place in the inner city 'public' schools. As the study progressed, many people in the community attended our performances 'out of curiosity' not an interest in Cunningham's techniques or work. Most expressed an interest in attending another dance concert following our performance.

This study involved a specific collaboration with visual artist, Adrian Hatfield, along with a group of students at Douglas Alternative Elementary School. In the back of the stage, there were three large drop panels in the style of 'action painting' of Pollock. I integrated some of collaborative components with the art teacher. Many students worked on the three panels, further expanding the interest in Cunningham's work and building additional audience members. There was collaboration with the lighting designers John
Bohuslawsky, and Carrie Cox. Bohuslawsky lit our performances. Cox served as assistant and traveled to New York City to serve as lighting designer and stage manager at the Cunningham Studio.

As part of our performance preparation in NYC, Chrys Gee designed an 11 x 14-color poster for our concert (See appendix A, page 90). I wanted to demonstrate to the students everything is not copied in the teachers lounge at school; we can present ourselves in a professional manner. The woman crouching down low with an outreached hand is Stacy Reischman. She is a faculty member at the Department of Dance at Ohio State University. One of my students is lying on the floor below Reischman. I was very interested in offering Reischman an opportunity to perform solo work in the studio. She has an MFA in Performance from Ohio State University and is an excellent performer. I wanted to give her an opportunity to show her work in the Cunningham Studio, and further extend the experience for the students. In addition, the opportunity provided Reischman with a challenge for herself.

**Implications for Further Research and Recommendations**

The implications for the study are as follows: remain open to experiencing, question common practices, and explore new ideas. Students can successfully accomplish amazing things in school if challenged. If opportunities to explore experience, question, and share their work is available, student will excel. Students enjoy and learn from observing their teachers as ‘role models’ in school.

What did this study demonstrate about ‘objectives and curricular materials’ in the elementary dance program? This study is a clear demonstration of the aesthetic possibilities with elementary school students. It is an example of the sophistication and potential elementary students can accomplish in dance education. This study demonstrated that elementary students can surpass current ‘objectives and curricular materials’ in the elementary school dance programs. The students were eager to try new ideas. They willingly attended daily recess and evening rehearsals (Tuesday and Thursday) during this study. They
understood the importance of clarity of movement intent, concentration, and commitment, in addition to the techniques of Merce Cunningham.

Dance education teaches and validates the importance of individuality and self-expression. In dance experiences, we learn respect for diversity. We demonstrate this through our individualized behaviors and unique problem solving in a studio setting. My recommendation for further study is to acknowledge the significance of dance education in our schools, and to demonstrate the significance through demonstration.

This study demonstrated how the techniques of Merce Cunningham were successfully explored with students. This research design could be used to study the history, techniques, style, meaning, and insight of other prominent visual and performing artists in educational settings.
APPENDIX A

PERFORMANCE PROGRAMS AND MATERIALS
Children’s Dance:
An Exploration through the Techniques of Merce Cunningham

Wednesday, April 16, 1997

THIRD AVENUE PERFORMANCE SPACE, 7:00 p.m. • Free •
Douglas Alternative Elementary School Dance Program, Columbus, Ohio

“Merce Cunningham developed his own school of dancing and choreography, the continuity of which no longer relies on linear elements, be they narrative or psychological, nor does it rely on a movement towards or away from a climax. As in abstract painting, it is assumed that the element (a movement, a sound, a change of light) is in and of itself expressive; what is communicated is in a large part determined by the observer himself.” - John Cage

Overview of the Year-Long Project
Choosing the Participants
The Choreographic/Creative Process

Intermission

Place (1997)

Music: Laurie Anderson: Cunningham Stories (At the Age of Twelve...)
composed by Laurie Anderson (1993), Text by John Cage (1968)

Oregon from Chance/Choice
"a group composition by Paul McCandless, Glen Moore, and Ralph Towner
offered in the memory of John Cage (1993)

Takehisa Kosugi from 75 Letters and Improvisation
Composed by Takehisa Kosugi (1987-1993)

Laurie Anderson: Cunningham Stories (Every Morning...)
composed by Laurie Anderson (1993), Text by John Cage (1968)

David Tudor’s Webwork
(excerpt) Music for the Merce Cunningham dance Shards
Composed by David Tudor (1988)

Kronos Quartet: Excerpt from Thirty Pieces for String Quartet
Composed by John Cage (1984)
Written for Kronos Quartet

Patrick Moraz: Three Dances for Two Prepared Pianos, Dance #1
Composed by John Cage (1945)
Pianos prepared by Chuck Turner & Patrick Moraz

Choreography: The Dancers and Sharon Urau
Lighting Design: John Bohuslawsky, The Ohio State University, Department of Dance and TAPS
Costumes: Nancy Vallette, Douglas Visual Arts Teacher, and Dharma Clothing Company, California
Photography: Dr. Keith Kaufman, coordinator


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PLACE (1998)
Children's Dance: Questioning the Boundaries
An Exploration Through the Techniques of Merce Cunningham

A fifty minute work directed by Sharon Linz
Performed by Douglas Alternative Elementary School students,
Columbus, OH in conjunction with The Ohio State University
Department of Dance

Fri. 24 April 8 pm
Sat. 25 Apr 8 pm

Merce Cunningham Dance Studio
55 Bushnell Ave.
Columbus, OH 43214

Tickets $10.00

For reservations and information call 212-365-1978

Solo works performed by Stacy Rechman
Tres Amas de Mina (1981)
Tacto Tragic (1984)
Faceta (1997)

Concert Program
MERCE CUNNINGHAM
1. Merce Cunningham in “Solo” (1973)
2. Merce Cunningham during rehearsal “Un Jour ou Deux” (1973)
3. Merce Cunningham in “Changeling” (1957)
4. Merce Cunningham in 1942 (photo by Barbara Morgan)
5. Antic Meeting (1958)
6. Two Step (1949)
7. Merce

CUNNINGHAM’S CHOREOGRAPHIC WORK
9. On stage at the Paris Opera
11. Suite for Five in Time and Space (later called “Suite for 5” (1956)
12. MC and his company
13. Jeff Slayton, Valda Setterfield, Carolyn Brown, Chase Robinson
   second photo: Chase Robinson and Sandra Neels
15. Company class

CUNNINGHAM’S CHANCE PROCEDURES
16. Squaregame (prep for takes from 3 cameras)
17. Tapes of Angles
20. Canfield
21. Canfield
22. Canfield
23. "Suite by Chance"— movement... (1953)
24. "Suite by Chance"— space
25. "Suite by Chance"— duration
27. "Summerspace"— movement choices
29. "Signals"— the lines... (1970)
30. "Photos"
31. "Photos"

OUR TABLEAUXS TAKEN FROM CUNNINGHAM PHOTOGRAPHS
32. "Walkaround Time" Sandra Neels (1968)
33. "Canfield" (1969)
34. Untitled Solo (1953)
35. Landrover (1972)
36. MC practice
37. "Roaratorio" photo from 1986... premiered in 1983
38. Canfield (1969)
39. Trackers (1992)
40. Rainforest (1968)
41. Objects (1970)
42. Nightwandering (1958)
43. Calopede (1981)
44. Cage and me (1984)

EVENTS #s 46-52... pictures from various performances
Children’s Dance:
An Exploration through the Techniques of Merce Cunningham

Friday, January 9, 1998
at
The Ohio State University, Department of Dance, Sullivan Theater
8:00 p.m.

$5.00 Adults, $3.00 Students

Columbus Public Schools
Douglas Alternative Elementary School Dance Program, Columbus, Ohio

"Merce Cunningham developed his own school of dancing and choreography, the continuity of which no longer relies on linear elements, be they narrative or psychological, nor does it rely on a movement towards or away from a climax. As in abstract painting, it is assumed that the element (a movement, a sound, a change of light) is in and of itself expressive; what is communicated is in a large part determined by the observer himself." - John Cage

Place (1997)

Music: Laurie Anderson: Cunningham Stories (Merce Cunningham Phoned His Mother...)
composed by Laurie Anderson (1993), Text by John Cage (1968)

Oregon from Chance/Choice
A group composition by Paul McCandless, Glen Moore, and Ralph Towner
offered in the memory of John Cage (1993)

Takehisa Kosugi from 75 Letters and Improvisation
Composed by Takehisa Kosugi (1987-1993)

Laurie Anderson: Cunningham Stories (Every Morning...)
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(excerpt) Music for the Merce Cunningham dance Shards
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Composed by John Cage (1984)
Written for Kronos Quartet

Patrick Moraz: Three Dances for Two Prepared Pianos, Dance #1
Composed by John Cage (1945)
Pianos prepared by Chuck Turner & Patrick Moraz

Laurie Anderson: Cunningham Stories (At the Age of Twelve...)
composed by Laurie Anderson (1993), Text by John Cage (1968)

Robert Ashley: Factory Preset
composed by Robert Ashley (1993)

Anonymous: New York City
recorded outside of John Cage’s apartment
Credits:

Choreography: The Douglas Dancers and Sharon Unrau

Lighting Design: John Bohuslawsky and Carrie Cox, The Ohio State University, Department of Dance
Videographer: Dr. Will Smith, The Ohio State University, Department of Dance
Costumes: Nancy Vallette (South High School) and Dharma Clothing Company, California
Photography: Dr. Keith Kaufman
Prop Master: Sammy Fairchild

Year-Long Dance Trip Coordinator: Ms. Donna Fairchild
Year-Long Dance Fundraising/Grant Coordinator: Dr. Keith Kaufman
Year-Long Dance Trip Treasurer/Accountant: Mr. Roger Dzwonczyk

Douglas Alternative Elementary School Principal: Mr. James Cardell

The Douglas Dancers would like to thank Karen Bell (Chair, OSU Department of Dance), and John Bohuslawsky (Lecturer, OSU Department of Dance) and the DNC 633 Lighting students. Thank you for taking an interest in our dance and supporting our work.

We, The Douglas Dancers, would like to thank the audience attending tonight's performance. All proceeds will be applied to our four-day trip to New York City in April of 1998. While in NYC, we will visit the NBC "Today Show" window, take a tour of the NBC studios and eat lunch in Central Park. We will visit the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, Empire State Building, Battery Park, South Street Seaport and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Our evenings will be filled with dancing. We will perform our dance at the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio on Friday, April 24th and Saturday, April 25th, 1998. Additional donations are welcome and needed. Please send checks (payable to Douglas Alternative Elementary School, c/o Donna Fairchild, 43 Douglass St., Cols. OH 43205. For questions regarding the project call Sharon Unrau at 365.8065.
Kids take chance with dance

Youngsters perform tonight, take show on the road

by Ruth E. Surnamak

Dancing, telling and presenting are part of the "Fire in the Sky" experience for 24 children at Columbus Alternative Elementary School.

The children have been working on a dance show that will be performed tonight at the school by dance teacher Cheri Conlin. The show is called "Fire in the Sky," and it will feature a variety of dances, including hip-hop, jazz, ballet, and contemporary. The show is a celebration of the children's talent and creativity.

The children have been working on the show for several weeks, practicing every day after school. The show will be presented in a small, intimate setting, with the audience close to the performers. The children are excited to share their hard work with their friends and family.

The show is part of an after-school program at the school, where the children receive instruction in various art forms, including dance, music, and drama. The program is designed to provide a supportive and creative environment for young people to explore their artistic interests.

The show begins at 7:00 p.m. and is free to the public. The school is located at 300 S. Front St. in Columbus. For more information, please contact the school at 614-469-3386.
Lumens

Apr 24 and
Apr 25 1998

PLACE (1998)
Children's Dance:
An Exploration through the Techniques of Merce Cunningham

A fifty-minute work directed by Sharon Unrau
Performed by Douglas Alternative Elementary School students, Columbus, OH
in conjunction with the Department of Dance at
The Ohio State University

Merce Cunningham Dance Studio
55 Bethune Street
New York City, New York 10014

Children's Dance:
An Exploration through the Techniques of Merce Cunningham

"Merce Cunningham developed his own school of dancing and choreography,
the continuity of which no longer relies on linear elements, be they narrative
or psychological, nor does it rely on a movement towards or away from a
climax. As in abstract painting, it is assumed that the element (a movement,
a sound, a change of light) is in and of itself expressive; what is communicated
is in a large part determined by the observer himself." - John Cage

PLACE (1998)
Directed by Sharon Unrau
Set Design and Construction: Adrian Hatfield
Original Lighting Design: John Bobustalsky
Lighting Design: Carrie Cox
Costumes: Drama Trading Company

Daphne Lambropoulos, Christina Cagan, Lillie Boggs, Hilary Remley, Jillian
McCance, Rose Trover, Katherine Lin, Sara Dwonczyk, Karma Shafaieh,
Laura Bolte, Lauren Sewell, Emily Steedman, Myricka Moorland, Garth
Shack, Ashley Franklin, Hannah Michael-Swartz, Samantha Murphy, and
Carleigh Fairchild, Sammy Fairchild, Joy Havens, Stacy Reischman,
Melissa Stephenson, Amy Zaya, Kelly Hughes, Chrys Cee, Stephanie Ray

Jones, Ashley Ratliff, John Bennett, Ross McCartney, Sayde Sevell, Laura
Bolte, Michelle Hill, Janay Joyner

Music: Laurie Anderson: Cunningham Stories "Merce Cunningham Phoned
His Mother..."
composed by Laurie Anderson (1993), Text by John Cage (1968)

Oregon from "Chance/Choice"
A group composition by Paul McCandless, Glen Moore, Ralph Towne
offered in the memory of John Cage (1993)

Takehisa Kosugi from "75 Letters and Improvisation"
Composed by Takehisa Kosugi (1967-1993)

Laurie Anderson: Cunningham Stories "Every Morning..."
composed by Laurie Anderson (1993), Text by John Cage (1968)

David Tudor's "Webwork"
(excerpt) Music for the Merce Cunningham dance "Shards"
Composed by David Tudor (1988)

Kronos Quartet: Excerpt from "Thirty Pieces for String Quartet"

Patrick Moraz: "Three Dances for Two Prepared Pianos, Dance #1"
Composed by John Cage (1945)
Pianos prepared by Chuck Turner and Patrick Moraz

Laurie Anderson: Cunningham Stories "At the Age of Twelve..."
composed by Laurie Anderson (1993), Text by John Cage (1968)

Robert Ashley: "Factory Preset"
composed by Robert Ashley (1993)

Anonymous: "New York City"
recorded outside of John Cage's apartment

Laurie Anderson: Cunningham Stories "The Cunningham Company...
composed by Laurie Anderson (1993), Text by John Cage (1968)
PLACE (1998) Program Notes by Sharon Unrau

Elementary Dance Project Goals

This dance project was developed to explore the creative boundaries of elementary school children through dance education and document this process to facilitate its replication in other schools. This project explores the academic and personal growth of twenty-five elementary school children through somatic (holistic) theories and technical practices developed by one of the most influential dancer/choreographers of the twentieth century, Merce Cunningham. The students in the project are a multi-ethnic, multi-racial group of children between the ages of eight and eleven years old and are enrolled at an alternative elementary school located in the city of Columbus, Ohio. The project proposes to examine the students' creative expression through the Cunningham dance theories and techniques. Written and video documentation will be produced and made available as a resource guide to educators, administrators, and scholars who can initiate and produce similar experiences with students in their communities.

Who is Merce Cunningham?

Merce Cunningham, 79, is the originator of chance procedures and computer technology in modern dance, both serve as cornerstones in this project. He is the last great modern dance pioneer. Chance procedures reflect a move away from an exclusive reliance on rigidly choreographed movements in a performance. Instead, certain elements of spontaneity and chance are built into the piece. For example, having dancers throw large foam dice and then making the number of jumps that appear on dice would represent the introduction of chance. As a result, no two performances would be exactly the same. The involvement of computer technology represents the use of a software package (LifeForms™), by the students and myself, that allows for computer-based choreography of dance phrases that serve as the foundation for the students' dance. Merce Cunningham, along with his associates at Credo Multimedia Software, Inc.®, designed the LifeForms™ software as a movement-based program.

Elementary School Students' Involvement in Mr. Cunningham's Dance

Can children communicate the 'essence' of Cunningham's work? 'Essence,' in dance, is defined as the main idea communicated in and through the choreography. The properties or attributes of which something can be placed in its proper class or identified as being what it is. What plays an 'essential' role in Cunningham's work? Could it play a role in this project? I arrived at four 'essences' I value in Cunningham's work: the use of time, space, intention and attention. Could this be accomplished with young dancers, and if so, to what degree?

Since my experiences teaching elementary school children dance suggested that they respond well to challenging material, I began to experiment by teaching my students the theory of Merce Cunningham's dance as well as dance exercises and choreographic explorations in this style. The children were eager to participate in choreographing the section of PLACE (1998) as well as dancing in them. The challenges of this dance style offered children the potential for creative expression, skill development, and an enhanced self-esteem. Success with this project also offered a means of capturing the attention of children who might otherwise have little interest in the arts or might spend their time in less productive endeavors. The project was so engaging that a number of students who have graduated from the school (Sammy Fairchild, Lillie Boggs, Hilary Remley, and Jillian McCance) and moved into the middle school have chosen to continue their participation in the project.

Work in this style led to a year-long dance project involving daily practice, adjustments and additions to the dance pieces, and a final public performance at The Third Avenue Performance Space on Cunningham's seventy-eighth birthday, April 16, 1997. Feedback from The Ohio State University dance department faculty, parents, students and other educational staff suggested the need to expand the project.

This year, involvement with The Ohio State University students added a new dimension to this work. Offering elementary students a chance to partner with The Ohio State University dancers further challenged them and afforded opportunities for growth in skills and self-esteem. This element allowed for an incorporation of a mentoring aspect into the process and is expected to have a significantly positive impact on the Douglas and The Ohio State University dancers.

Set Design and Construction

The painting club has been learning about Abstract Expressionism, focusing on the groundbreaking aspects of the style such as freedom of expression and its energetic, emotionally charged technique. The paintings are inspired by the work of Jackson Pollock and are done in his Action Painting style. Action Painting, Pollock's contribution to Abstract Expression, includes abandoning traditional painting tools such as easels and brushes. The canvas has been placed on the floor and the paint applied by pouring and flinging it with sticks. This enables the artist to walk around the painting and, as Pollock said, "becomes the gesture of the painting."
About Douglas Alternative Elementary School

Douglas Alternative Elementary School is an open-space, whole language, arts impact school which is part of a public school district. The city is an extension of the school curriculum. The school has a long history of community involvement dating from the early 1900's. The present building, which opened in 1976, was designed to have free-flowing/open-space flexible classroom areas grouped around a central library.

The school provides an education that makes a difference in children's lives. By encouraging the individual development of children's intelligences (based on Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences), attitudes, knowledge, and skills, the school prepares them to be life-long learners and responsible members of society.

The school has its own team of three arts specialists who focus on music, dance/movement, and visual/spatial arts. Over 80% of the teachers at the school have earned their Master's degrees. The school's teachers are actively involved in the Professional Development School with The Ohio State University. Teachers and staff strive to foster a child-centered atmosphere for learning.

Douglas Alternative Elementary School is located at 43 Douglas Street, Columbus, Ohio 43205. For further information, contact Sharon Unrau at 614.365.8065 or electronically at <unrau.1@osu.edu>.

Biographies

Vera Blaine (Professor Emerita, The Ohio State University) studied professionally at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance and at the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio. Her choreography has been produced by professional companies including HARRY dance and other works by Senta Driver and freelance dance artists in New York, London and Israel. She became the chairperson for the dance department in 1983, was awarded The Ohio State University Alumni Distinguished Teaching Award, and was the first recipient of the Chairperson's Recognition Award at OSU. A former president of OhioDance, she received the 1996 OhioDance Award for the contributions she made to the development of dance in the state. As Professor Emerita since 1995, she teaches dance composition part-time and serves as a consultant for dance programs in higher education.

John Bobuslawsky (Original Lighting Designer, PLACE) is currently a Lecturer/Production Manager in The Ohio State University Department of Dance and also serves as Stage Manager for BalletMetropolitan. His most recent works include "Requiem" by Birgit Scherzer (Ballet Met), "East Market Gardens" by John Giffin (CATCO), and "9 Scenes with Interviews" by Victoria Uris (Wexner Center Performance Space and Sullivant Theater). He recently lit work work for choreographers Tiffany J. Mills and Ursula Payne at the Merce Cunningham Studio.

Chrys Gee is currently pursuing an M.F.A. in Dance and Technology from The Ohio State University. Chrys discovered dance at Case Western Reserve University where she graduated Magna Cum Laude with a B.S. in Biomechanical Engineering. Her choreography, videography, installation and multimedia works have been presented in Columbus, Ann Arbor, Cleveland, Detroit, Toronto, and London. Her LifeForms research and animation were featured at the Second Dance and Technology Conference in 1996. Chrys has designed and programmed a variety of instructional interactive multimedia projects, including CD-ROMs on Contemporary Art and Music, Voter Participation, and Phonetics for Actors.

Adrian Hatfield earned his B.S. in Art Education as well as his B.F.A in Painting (Magna Cum Laude, Honors) both from The Ohio State University. He has also studied at The Columbus College of Art and Design where he focused on drawing and illustration. As a professional artist he has shown extensively in the Columbus and Washington D.C. area as well as internationally. Adrian has taught art in various settings and is currently the visual/spatial specialist at Douglas Alternative Elementary School in Columbus Ohio.
Joy Havens received her early professional training in Indianapolis, Indiana as an apprentice with Dance Kaleidoscope under the direction of David Hooey. Joy's performance highlights include The National American College Festival at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the International Choreographers Commissioning Program at the American Dance Festival. She was honored with the Award of Merit at the National Society of Arts and Letters Modern Dance Competition in 1995. Joy is currently a junior at The Ohio State University with an emphasis in Performance and Choreography. While at OSU she has performed the works of Moses Pendleton and Tere O'Connor, and has performed in "The Rape of the Lock," a baroque ballet directed by Karen Woods and Nena Couch. The guest artists she has studied under include Tere O'Connor, Karen Woods, and Nena Couch. The guest artists she has studied under include Tere O'Connor, Karen Woods, and Nena Couch.

Kelly Hughes is in her sophomore year at The Ohio State University Department of Dance. Working towards a B.F.A. in Dance Performance, Kelly spends much of her time studying Eastern movement forms and philosophy, folk culture, religion, somatics, and bodywork methods. She has trained at the University of Akron Dance Institute, Cleveland Ballet, and BalletMetropolitan. She has performed with the Cleveland Chamber Ballet and Repertory Dance Company (U. Akron), in new works by choreographers Tom Smith, Meredith Rainey, Priscilla Wagner, and in repertory set by Lana Carroll and Angelica Wolfe from Jennifer Muller/WHITE WORKS.

Stephanie Ray is a junior at The Ohio State University studying dance, with an emphasis in Choreography and Labanotation. She spent the first ten years of her life as a synchronized swimmer. As an eleven year old, she began her dance studies at the Marjorie Jones School of Ballet, where she currently serves on their teaching faculty. She performed in "The Rape of the Lock" a ballet in the baroque style directed by Karen Woods and Nena Couch and appears in the videodance *Singin'sposis*, shown at the Immedia Digital Arts Festival (Enyon College in Gambier, Ohio, where she teaches dance technique, Labanotation and directs and choreographs. She is also on the dance faculty at BalletMetropolitan in Columbus, Ohio. Reischman has directed her works at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. Reischman has directed her works at BalletMetropolitan in Columbus, Ohio. Reischman has directed her works at BalletMetropolitan in Columbus, Ohio. Reischman has directed her works at BalletMetropolitan in Columbus, Ohio. Reischman has directed her works at BalletMetropolitan in Columbus, Ohio. Reischman has directed her works at BalletMetropolitan in Columbus, Ohio. Reischman has directed her works at BalletMetropolitan in Columbus, Ohio. Reischman has directed her works at BalletMetropolitan in Columbus, Ohio. Reischman has directed her works at BalletMetropolita

Melissa Stephenson is a graduate of Hope College with a B.A. in Dance. While pursuing her undergraduate degree, she performed in the works of Julio Rivera and Maxine Dillruyn. She also participated in the arts community outreach program Strike Time Dance Company, introducing dance to elementary school children. Currently Melissa is a Master of Arts Candidate at The Ohio State University in Dance History and Labanotation. As a graduate student, Melissa has focused primarily on Labanotation and has directed works by choreographers such as Ming-Shen Ku, Judith Allen, and Doris Humphrey. Last Spring, she portrayed a lead character in "The Rape of the Lock" a ballet in the baroque style, directed by Karen Woods and Nena Couch.

Sharon Unrau earned her B.A. in Dance Education from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. As an undergraduate she danced in the repertory works of Maggie Taloom, Karen Goodman, Claire Porter and Ze Eva Cohen. She earned her M.A. in Dance from Ohio State University, with an emphasis in Choreography and Laban Movement Studies. Following graduation, she performed in Bill T. Jones' evening length work, "The Promised Land" and for Stephen Koplowitz, Dancing in the Streets, NYC. Sharon is a Certified Movement Analyst (C.M.A.) and currently serving on the education committee at The Laban/Bartenieff Center of Movement Studies. She is a Ph.D. candidate in Somatic Studies at OSU researching creativity and somatics. Last Spring, she portrayed Thalestris/The Queen of Spleen in "The Rape of the Lock" a ballet in the baroque style, directed by Karen Woods and Nena Couch. Sharon spent part of last summer as an arts fellow at the Atlantic Center for the Arts and worked with Merce Cunningham, Mgg Harper and Elliot Caplan. She is the Dance Specialist at Douglas Alternative Elementary School in Columbus, Ohio.

Amy Zaya is a native of Cincinnati Ohio and a graduate of the School for Creative and Performing Arts in Dance and Music Theatre. Amy is a senior at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, majoring in Exercise Science. Amy has performed with the Metropolitan Classical Ballet Company, Cincinnati Ballet Company, Cincinnati Pops, Cincinnati Opera, Marymount Manhattan Dance Company, the Columbus Crew, and The Ohio State University Department of Dance. Her training also includes a variety of intensive programs such as the Martha Graham Summer Intensive, the University of Cincinnati's College Conservatory of Music's program, and the Dayton Ballet's summer program.
Credits:
Douglas Alternative Elementary School Principal: James Gardell
Douglas Alternative Elementary School Secretary: Pam Viars

Dance Project Grant/Fundraising Chair: Keith Kaufman
Dance Project Coordinator: Donna Fairchild
Dance Project Treasurer: Roger Dzwonczyk

Poster/Program Cover Design: Chrys Gee
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Merce Cunningham Studio.

The use of cameras and recording devices is strictly prohibited.
INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Historical:
1. What attracted you to dancing (and/or working) with Merce Cunningham? What prior experiences did you bring with you? What year did you begin working with Merce Cunningham?

2. How long did you dance for Merce Cunningham? What was/is your major contribution to the company, and to Merce Cunningham? What is your current role? Did you perform odd jobs at performances or the studio (e.g. bookkeeping, costume work, stagecraft)?

3. From my readings, there have been approximately eight to ten generations of Cunningham dancers since the formation of the company in 1952. What generation did/do you fit into? Did dancers before you influence you? If so, whom and how?

4. In my research, very few past Cunningham Company dancers (Viola Farber, Karole Armitage, and Ellen Cornfield) have choreographed their own works. Why? Have you choreographed work? If so, was it successful?

5. As all of us, someday Merce Cunningham will die; according to David Vaughan, only a few of Merce's works will survive and belong to the important canon on the 20th Century dance history. What works do you believe will be most remembered and why?

Artistic Product/Aesthetic:
1. Discuss Merce Cunningham's aesthetic.

2. Merce Cunningham, in conversation about his work, in "The I Ching and Me," often talks about "the theater," as opposed to "the dance." Why?

3. Is Merce Cunningham's work derived from human concerns, nature, society, and relationships? If so, how?

4. In "Shards" (1987) the original costumes were brightly colored costumes. Why were they replaced?

5. In "Doubles" (1994) two casts were used. Interdeterminacy (chance) was incorporated into the making of the work. Did the dancers have choices available to them during the rehearsal process and/or performance of the piece?

6. Did you ever perform in "Story" (1963)? If so, describe creating your own movement phrases? Do the current dancers have opportunities to create his/her own movement phrases in dance works? If so, when?

7. Discuss working with collaborators (e.g. visual artists, costumes, composers, and musicians).
Technique/Choreographic Process & Structure(s):
1. Define Cunningham technique. Describe a typical Cunningham dance technique class past and present.

2. What are the ‘key’ essences of the dance technique and the integration into the choreographic works?

3. Robert Grekov in his article entitled, *Merce Cunningham as Sculptor,* he has said Cunningham dancers work “from” (1/2 tones) positions that we normally expect dancers to work “through.” This statement puzzles me. What does this mean?

4. How do you envision your role as a teacher of Cunningham technique? What are your responsibilities as a teacher? What are the students responsibilities to them? What are the students responsibilities toward you?

5. Did/Does Merce Cunningham incorporate imagery in his rehearsal/creative process? If so, did/does the uses of imagery fascinate story lines and relationships in the work for the dancers?

6. In 1991, Merce Cunningham began using the human movement animation program, LifeForms™ as a creative tool. Has this changed his rehearsal process and creative work? If so, how?

7. According to David Vaughan, Merce Cunningham currently spends 1/3 of his creative time with the dancers in rehearsal, and 2/3 of his creative time with the computer. Is this true? If so, how has this shifted from the past? Has it effected how rehearsals are conducted now? If so, how?

Relationships:
1. Discuss Merce Cunningham’s role as a teacher and as a choreographer.

2. Discuss your experiences performing with/for Merce Cunningham. If possible, site specific examples and dance works (e.g. dance works and Events). What was your favorite piece to dance, and why? Did you enjoy dancing in Events? If so, why?

3. Is Merce Cunningham interested in the dynamic between his choreography and the dancers who dance it? If so, how?

4. Is there a sense of community (and family) between Merce Cunningham and his dancers? Between dancer to dancer? If so, has it been consistent or changed over the years?

5. Is Merce Cunningham a friend toward his dancers? Are there boundaries? If so, where? How is he as a human being personally/artistically (e.g. compassionate, assertive, demanding, yielding)?

6. Is Merce Cunningham interested in offering and/or facilitating a ‘whole’ experience for his dancers? If so, how?

7. What do you value in Cunningham’s work?

8. Has working for Merce Cunningham enriched you life? If so, how?
INTERVIEWS

Introduction

Seven individuals offered to share their experiences learning, dancing, and working with Merce Cunningham. Five of the six individuals work directly with Merce Cunningham. One person is a lecturer at Ohio State University, with a specialized interest in the work of Merce Cunningham. The interview questionnaire was extensive and divided into four sections: historical, technique and choreographic process, artistic and aesthetics, and relationships. I used the questionnaire as a guide. In some cases, it served simply as a device to begin a dialogue. Five of the seven interviews were conducted during an initial visit to the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio and Cunningham Archives the week of August 10th, 1998. Two of the interviews occurred recently, in July of 1999: Swinston (Assistant to Merce Cunningham) July 22nd, 1999 and an interview I did not include in this section with Alice Halpern (Cunningham Studio Administrator and Teacher), was a telephone interview August 19, 1999.

The interviews are in alphabetical order, of equally importance, and in an informal summary form. The individuals I spoke with shared a great deal of professional and personal feelings toward working with their colleagues and Merce Cunningham. In respect of their privacy, I have omitted data that does not directly inform or address questions pertaining to this study. I became well-informed of Cunningham’s techniques and how his dancers experience his creative process. All of the interviewees spoke highly towards two individuals whom significantly inspired Merce Cunningham’s work, Chris Komar (d. 1996, assistance artistic director to Merce Cunningham) and John Cage (d. 1993, Merce Cunningham’s mentor, ground-breaking collaborator, and partner). Though the literature review acknowledged the importance of John Cage in relation to Cunningham’s work, the
interviews presented an equally important individual, especially to the company dancers, Chris Komar.

Louise Burns, Merce Cunningham Dance Studio, August 11, 1998

On Tuesday, August 11, 1998, I interviewed past company member and faculty teacher, Louise Burns, at the Cunningham Studio in New York City. We conducted the interview in the dance company room, which is used for lunch and breaks by the dancers. What is notable about this interview is that on August 11, 1993, John Cage suffered a stroke and died the following day. This was on the mind of Burns as we began our interview. She shared her appreciation toward Cage and the significant influence he had on Cunningham and everyone that met him. She stated that Merce did not coach her movement too much or praise her in class or rehearsals. She seemed to be comfortable with this fact, though I questioned if she wished Merce had paid her more attention to her.

She stressed the equal attention to each movement, nothing was more important than anything was else was. She stated that Merce did not use imagery in his coaching and that he coached the physicality of the movement. Cunningham was not after an effect, rather a physical sensation, seen clearly the dancers use the stage space in Summerspace. The Cunningham dance technique is an excellent example of balance and support. For example, the dance Winterbranch includes a great deal of movement that addresses off-balance work (not falling).

She described Merce's work as 'skyscraper, teeters a bit at the top, but always maintains a strong sense of verticality and grounded-ness.' The amount of sway is dependent on the number of factors. Burns stated she is not currently teaching Cunningham dance technique at the studio. She stressed that most of the dancers in her classes will never dance for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, though they will most likely dance elsewhere for another choreographer. She did say she taught components of the Cunningham technique such as off-balance movement, back exercises, speed, continuity of movement, jumps, stillness and
are teaching composition and choreographic phrases in their class, instead of dance
technique.

Burns said students were responsible to themselves and right now students are awful
about waiting for someone else, often the teacher, to motivate them in class. The students wait
around for the teacher to take the learning to them, instead of the student seeking and
outwardly searching for greater skill independently. She emphasized the importance of
Merce's work of pushing beyond 'correct' to experience something new. To 'not' dance safely,
risk, take a chance. Many students wait for comments, as opposed to approaching the class
through self-correction. She said this was not the case when she started dancing at the
Cunningham studio in the sixties. People fought and wrestled with the movement. It was a
different time; the world was fighting and wrestling.

Burns emphasized her concern over resistance from students in the dance class.
Sometimes they (they students) will not meet me half way and they resist change. They will
not let me teach them; they do not permit me to teach. Many students do not approach the
movement from a personal intelligence. They fall short of acknowledging that the movement
physically looks and feels different on their body, as opposed to my body or a classmate's.
Students are complacent. Merce would always say, "Be in the time and space 'your' in. Be in
the time and space of 'your' movement."

Burns loved *Events*, the sound accompaniment, movement, unpredictability of the
structure. She loved it. She did not enjoy the set repertoire as much, feeling that doing specific
things at a specific time was not as challenging or exciting as a performer. She also stated
*Events* brought out an energy in her dancing that was comfortable and exciting. She stated
that Merce created pieces specifically for the strengths of the dancers in his company. The
company class is usually a vehicle for current work. She noted that a great deal of work is now
performed in relevé (rise onto ball of foot). She noted that Chris Komar and Robert Swinston
fascilitated information between Merce Cunningham and the company dancers. She stated
that the ideas have been translated from Merce Cunningham to Chris Komar to Robert
that the ideas have been translated from Merce Cunningham to Chris Komar to Robert Swinston. Burns shared how much Merce and John enjoyed the 'creating' phases, the daily work, as opposed to the performances. They both enjoyed the process more than the final product.

Candace Feck, Ohio State University, July 7, 1997

On Friday, July 7th, 1998, I attended a lecture addressing the work of Merce Cunningham. Ohio State University Department of Dance lecturer, Candace Feck, gave the lecture. Ms. Feck stressed the influence of world history on artists, in particular Merce Cunningham. She addressed the profound changes that occurred following World War II. There was a supreme desire to reflect unpredictability in the arts. She addressed the significant capacity of John Cage in Cunningham's artistic development. The fact that Cage was redefining "what is music," was groundbreaking. Cage stated that any sound could be music. He also stressed that as humans, we never hear the same sound twice, and there is no such thing as 'silence.' Cage invented the prepared piano in 1938 and amazed as many as he disgusted in the arts world. He encouraged Cunningham to question the dependence of dance toward music. What is dance? Is it movement to music? Can any movement be dance? Is 'stillness' movement?

John Cage introduced Merce Cunningham to Zen Buddhism in the 1960's. The Vietnam War significantly increased the world telecommunications. The world became global during and immediately after the war. Zen Buddhism is very complex. It is rooted in focus, presence and attention to the moment. It also recognizes the interdependence of physical forces.

Merce Cunningham clarified his ideas with the encouragement of John Cage. Cunningham was highly influenced by chance operations found in the Buddhist I Ching. Cunningham began to challenge his audience 'to choose' what to look at in the performance space. He began to place movement on the stage, without regard to rules traditionally found in the choreographic world. When he began his company in 1952, he had principal dancers. As his approach to movement invention developed, he began to eliminate the concept of
principal dancers, and acknowledged all the dancers as equal. This concept continues today with his current dancers in the company.

Cunningham presents his work in an 'adult-like' manner. He does not draw a viewer attention toward or away movement. There are no high points or low points in his choreographic work. Everything is relative, equal, balanced. It is up to the viewer to decide where he will look in a dance. This idea, of course, being an application of Cage's theory of sound. A person does hear the same sound twice; neither does a viewer observe the same movement twice. There is no presentational or exaggerated attitude toward performing in Cunningham's work. He removes the artist's personality (his) through chance procedures. He allows the work to be what it is. He introduced the idea of 'open-field' choreography. He believes that randomness is a characteristic of life, and allows the spectator to finish the work. His use of space is based upon Albert Einstein's theory of 'there are no fixed points in space,' and that an 'open-field' use of space creates unlimited possibilities. He creates an environment that requires the observer to choose what to watch in a dance. He creates a kinetic experience for the dancer and the viewer. He defied authority of 'what is good dance,' and how to present 'dance' in regard to choreographic structure, specifically classical dance forms (suite, ABA, rondo, and theme and variation) taken directly from musical composition.


I interviewed Meg Harper on August 10, 1996 at a small quaint coffee shop in Greenwich Village. She was my first interview for this study. Before I begin to share Harper's thoughts with the reader, I want to acknowledge the significant support I received from Harper regarding this project. She discussed Cunningham's work on numerous occasions. During the study, we spoke on the telephone on several occasions. At the time of this study, she was faculty chair at the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio.

She began sharing with me her first experience seeing the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in 1966, with her mother in Chicago. The concert included Suite for Five with
Carolyn Brown, Merce Cunningham, Sandra Neals, Gus Solomon Jr., Art, Velda Setterfield and Barbara Lloyd. She also saw Night Wandering with Merce Cunningham and Carolyn Brown. She recalls the early works that she observed of Cunningham's having little dance technique, primarily dealt with performance ideas and chance operations. She said that most of the dancers did not have classical ballet training. Harper graduated from undergraduate school in 1966 and began studying dance at the Cunningham Studio in the fall of the same year. At that time, the studio was located at 3rd at 33rd street. She studies dance in the evenings and held a job as a secretary during the day. At that time, very few were teaching at the studio: Merce Cunningham, Sandra Neals, and Carolyn Brown. On occasion Viola Farber taught dance technique class.

Harper's Cunningham dance technique objectives in the early sixties relied primarily on the use of the spine and the ability to stand on your legs properly. She feels that nature is connected to each Cunningham work in some way. The technique emphasizes the movement evolving through physicality. As a young dancer at the studio and soon a company member, Harper did not understand the pieces, structurally (chance operations). She simply did what she was told to do with the movement. She understood the movement, how to move in the style. In choosing dancers for the company, Merce Cunningham chooses young individuals in which he can mold into his work. He looks for individuals that are totally devoted to his work. Harper stated that one of the saddest days in Cunningham's career was when Carolyn Brown left the company in 1972. Rumor was Carolyn Brown 'never' marked a dance. The work changed drastically after Ms. Brown's departure from the company. In 1973, Merce began to test the physical limitations of his dancers. In Changing Steps (1973), Merce explored his technique a bit further than in prior work. Harper also recalled her role in Rainforest, which she learned from Barbara Lloyd. She also noted that since so few were teaching the Cunningham technique there was a consistency with the 'elements' of the work in the beginning stages of the development of the technique, in particular the back exercises. When Harper was with the company things were quite open. In addition to dancing, she ironed
costumes and helps in additional areas other than performing. She stated that things are different now, since the magnitude of the company is much larger now.

Harper feels she has nothing to say as a choreographer. Harper choreographed one piece that she was willing to share with me during the interview. Entitled *Long Distance* (1978), it was a duet performed by Garry Rygenborger and Andrew Degroat. When I asked her what she believes will be remember when Merce Cunningham dies, her response was as follows: "The works that can be reproduced such as *Variations 5*, and *Night Wandering*. She also stressed that it would be nice to see these two pieces again on the stage. She believes that the newer works will be impossible to save and coach. Harper believes that the dancers, especially if they have strong training, will be able to dance the older works.

She has been quite active in re-staging Cunningham's works for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and Repertory Understudy Group (RUG), in addition to outside professional dance companies. She re-staged *Sounddance* with Chris Komar and *Fielding Sixes* from video. She worked off Merce's notes in most cases and found the structural ideas easier to understand in written form. She said *Sounddance* is about 'orbits.' All of the movement is in 'orbits,' in space and on a body level. In *Fielding Sixes*, is about rhythm, organized rhythm. The piece is composed of sixty-four sets of sixes. Some phrases are performed quicker than others are. The rhythm, or beat, is passed form group to group during the piece. The pulse travels from dancer to dancer in a systematic fashion. Though the piece requires a great deal of concentration, the dance is performed organically not from a cerebral perspective. The piece is an example of the inner workings of nature.

In further discussing her thoughts on Cunningham's work, Harper stated that he works with space in a ways that is simply of genius status, then he layers on chance operations. Merce uses a very narrow framework and from that creates relationships to the world. His aesthetic thinking operates similar to a Swiss army knife.

During the interview, Harper stressed the importance John had on her personally and professionally. The individuals most significant in Harper's life were John Cage, her
grandparents and parents. She grew up in a very religious family, and when she began working with Merce she realized that there was more than one way to look at things in the world. She also acknowledged for the first time that there are many correct ways to live one's life, not only one. Her initial experiences with Merce created awkwardness. Harper considers herself a spiritual woman, not a religious one. She said she found herself hiding in the church to escape dealing with challenging personal situations.

Harper is fascinated with the Cunningham dance technique, especially the back exercises. The way the back exercises is designed is profound. It is amazing how Cunningham has developed clear articulation between the back and the legs.

Harper is considered the lead teacher of the Cunningham technique at the studio. She feels dancers, in addition to class, should find time to independently explore the underlying principles of the dance technique. Maybe that means standing in a room in a house and simply performing a back exercise repetitively and reflecting on the experience. Harper is interested in having the dancers 'teach themselves,' as opposed to having the teacher 'direct' the learning. She believes too truly experience the full range of the Cunningham dance technique; the dancer must approach it as a whole package, heart and soul. A Cunningham dancer is aware of every cell in his body.

Harper stated that Merce Cunningham rarely used imagery. In a rare case (Secondhand), Cunningham asked the dancers to add gestures with the fingers. He used the imagery of how a plant reacts to sunlight. It moves so slowly toward the light. Eventually the leaves are pointed in an optimal direction to receive the sunrays. He asked the dancers to move with the same quality of movement, so slowly that one would not notice a change of shape. He used nature as a point of reference in coaching movement.

Robert Swinston. New York State Theater, NYC, July 20th, 1999

I interviewed Robert Swinston on Tuesday, July 20th at the New York State Theater at the Lincoln Center. Mr. Swinston and I discussed before our meeting that we would
informally discuss Cunningham's work and Swanson's role in the Dance Company. Swinston began our discussion by sharing his objectives for the upcoming Cunningham repertory workshop the week following the performances. We were discussing the concept of 'dance for its own sake,' which most individuals connect to Cunningham's work. Swinston pointed out the work he would teach the following week was quite violent and demanding for the dancers. He said it was clearly grounded in Cunningham dance technique, with an emphasis on weight shifts, thirty-five variations. The piece is grounded in fear, is odious, and toys with the concept of escape.' It is a thematic piece that he would definitely use imagery to teach to the dancers. The work required 'bare bones' strength to perform.

He commented on the complexity that the current repertory now entails. Every since LifeForm™, Swinston feels the work has taken a turn toward intensive complexity and intricate movement phrases. He said that Merce Cunningham is not interested in the dance works of the past, only the present. He considers his works in the past uninteresting and dated. He is interested in new ideas and explorations with movement and collaborations. In discussing Summerspace, Swinston re-staged the work with Carolyn Brown from notes videos and personal accounts. Since there was diversity, due to various factors in each video recording, the two of them decided which version to chose to re-work for the reconstruction. Swinston said of the early days, 'there was much less to think about,' the movement was given out and left to the dancer to complete. Cunningham choreographs no every single detail. He stated the vocabulary has not changed much over the years. The technique has expanded, especially with the incorporation of the human movement animation program LifeForm™ in 1991. Time on task has increased, due to the evolving complexity of the Cunningham movement vocabulary. Merce Cunningham is always looking for a new sense of awkwardness and struggle in his technical and choreographic explorations. Swinston said Merce broke his own history when he ran a full dress rehearsal with sound, lights, and special effect for the BIPED premiere in Berkley, California. His work has gotten so complicated technically that there was no sure way of determining the success of the piece without the run before the first
performance. BIPED presented Merce with a very different situation. This work had limitations. The projections required a specific lighting scheme. There was a scrim downstage of the dancers.

David Vaughan, Merce Cunningham Dance Archives, August 11, 1998

I interviewed David Vaughan on Tuesday, August 11, 1998. Since Mr. Vaughan is the Merce Cunningham Dance Foundation Archivist, I asked primarily questions with a historical context. The following paragraphs represent a summary of our discussion. The first question I asked Mr. Vaughan is which dances, if any, would remain after Cunningham's death. What will the company look like after Cunningham's death? He responded by stating that "the dances that remain will be the one's that can be danced." It will not be like the Limon Company, which is a repertory ensemble. There will only be a few dances that will remain due to the uniqueness of Merce's work. I asked him about the costume change in Shards. If Cunningham works in a collaborative way, why did he change the costumes in Shards? Vaughan responded that the change occurred due to the piece being a dark piece, and the costumes were quite bright, red. I asked Vaughan if the dancers ever had input in the choreographic process or chance operations? No. Movement was totally dictated by Merce Cunningham. Over the years, Merce Cunningham has not change his rehearsal process. With the addition of the human movement animation program LifeForm™, what has changed is how the movement is presented. In a LifeForm™ work, the movement is presented in a layered fashion. The movement phrases, and works, before LifeForm™ were taught as a unit. Mr. Vaughan also emphasized that Merce Cunningham is interested in the human element of movement, the humanness.

What does a Cunningham dancer look like? A Cunningham dancer is tall, long limbed (of course there are always exceptions), and fairly young and eager. Cunningham has worked with dancers that did not fit this stereotypical ideal such as Patricia Lent, whom was not necessarily born that way. He is most interested in how the dancers lengthen their muscles,
and what they can accomplish within their body limitations. Of particular note, Vaughan felt the ideal dancer were Carolyn Brown, Viola Farber, and Sandra Neals.

Mr. Vaughan recalled a specific time in his Cunningham experience that was noteworthy. He was one of the three speakers in *How to Pass, Kick, Run and Fall*. Some of the phrases, vocal selections, used in the sound score for *Place* were taken directly from this work. He also recalled the first *Event* performance in Vienna in 1964. He remembers questioning where the theater was located. There were a few lights, a small stage and nowhere for the audience to go during an intermission. Therefore, Merce put together excerpts from the concert repertoire he was touring and presented a one hour and twenty minute *Event*. John Cage, David Vaughan and Merce Cunningham put it together. He also recalled a performance in Iran during a very turbulent time in 1972 and one in Stockholm Sweden. Merce began to use *Events* for performances that yielded themselves to a wider range of movement. In some cases, Merce felt the regular repertoire would not be as well received as an *Event*. Vaughan also expressed that by reintroducing the world in the format of an *Event*, great expense could be saved in décor and re-staging a work in the original format. For example, works such as *Coast Zone* and *Installations* are too expensive to recreate in their entirety.

In closing, I asked Vaughan what he felt his responsibility to Merce Cunningham was and his reply is paraphrased as follows: “As the archivist, I am the data base, the liaison. I am often the tour guide, the spokesperson, and the historian in house and on tour. I started working for Merce as the studio secretary in December of 1959 on 14th Street. I was a dancer in London and in 1950 was involved with artist work at the School of American Theatre. I think what is most significant about dance is what I call the ABC’s of Dance History: Ashton, Balanchine and Cunningham.”
Karen (Radford) Woods, Ohio State University, June 22, July 10, August 8th, and October 16, 1998

On Monday, June 22, 1998, Karen (Radford) Woods presented a brief dialogue asserting her thoughts on Merce Cunningham’s dance technique and began with an overview of Cunningham’s class. She stated that Cunningham’s technique is based in the philosophy of the dancer ‘using what he has and pushing beyond.’ She stressed the three curves in the back: cervical, thoracic, and lumbar, and the importance of the initial back exercises that initiate each Cunningham technique class. Each class begins with a series of bounces to open the back. These bounces are customarily performed in sets of sixteen pulses or beats. The dancer begins in a parallel first position and curves forward. It is not a large movement spatially. The dancer pulses sixteen beats and then slowly returns to his verticality in eight counts. The pulses are then repeated to the right and left sides with an arm reach over the top and an eight-count transition through the vertical dimension. The sequence is then repeated in an outwardly rotated first and second position.

Immediately following the pulses, the class moves into the ‘codified’ back exercises. Each teacher teaches his or her own variation of the back exercises. For example, Woods teaches the back exercises differently than Harper or Louise Burns. This is due to what Cunningham was focused upon at the chronological time each dancer was dancing with the company and partaking in company class. It is apparent from the literature and from the interviews that Cunningham’s technique class focused on the various ways the torso moves (curve, tilt, arch, twist, and upright), rhythmic structures (with, against or independent of accompaniment) and chance operations.

What become apparent are the emphasis of line in the body and the unique use of phrasing in Cunningham’s work. The relationship with the timing: sensing and presence. The apparent ‘active stillness’ (stillness in motion), that punctuate the movement. The lack of transitions between phrases, the defined boundflow, the often sharp, crisp, movement. What also makes Cunningham’s technique unique is his use of weight changes.
I also learned how to put together an 'event' in Woods' classes. Though Cunningham

Events are usually composed of components of varying lengths of repertoire works, Woods has
used an equivalent idea with exercises from class. I took her class two different summers and
in both instances, we created an Event, which we rehearsed and performed at the final class
session.

Woods also stressed the importance of a 'group rhythm,' which can only be discovered
through repetition and rehearsal. She shared her experiences of working with the company
and how the 'strongest voice' determined the rhythmic phrasing and pace of a movement
sequence. This concept is also found in the literature review discussion of Torse (1978). She
shared that Merce's use of time was framed with clock time, a stopwatch or a pulse.
Cunningham stressed the importance of maintaining the integrity of the phrase structure. He
encouraged and coached his dancers not to indulge or speed up things.

On Friday, July 10, 1998, Woods directed a discussion on our class Event in relationship
to her experiences working in a similar modality with Merce Cunningham. She stressed that
she was using the concept and choreographic structure of an Event in a way that she makes
sense of it her own understanding and exploration. She shared the diverse places in which she
performed Events as a dancer with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, most notably in
Grand Central Station, and the Philadelphia Art Museum. She stressed the importance of
'visual cueing' and the importance of attention and intention in each movement. For our Event,
she wrote down the sequences on separate sheets of paper and placed them inside a small bag.
She then drew each piece out individually, creating a 'randomly' ordered sequence of
movement phrases. She shared with us that Cunningham used this idea to recycle old
repertoire (sections and complete works).

She found Events scary to do, stressing that sequences were told the afternoon of each
performance and there was never an opportunity for a 'cross-over.' She also noted that the
New York City Events were game-like for many audience members. Most audience member
found satisfaction in stating what excerpts were danced in each Event. As she closed her
discussion, she shared her devotion to Merce Cunningham. “As a dancer for Merce, I had a strong commitment toward him. A consistency, a presence. I began my study of Cunningham’s work as a scholarship student at the studio. Six months later I was an apprentice. Soon I was in the company.”

On the last day of class in July of 1998, Woods directed a video viewing for the class. She stressed that we can learn a great deal by watching what the body can do and the individual explorations the choreographic work requires. What does this movement phrase ‘mean’ on my body? She stressed the highly technical capacity of the work and the many hours she spends independently investigating Cunningham’s movement on her body. She stressed the high degree of ballet training needed to perform Cunningham’s work at the most fundamental level.

I had a final interview with Woods on Friday, August 8th, 1998, upon my return from the Atlantic Center for the Arts Fellowship with Merce Cunningham, Meg Harper and Elliot Caplan. It was a very brief interview, thirty minutes, due to time limitations and scheduling. I asked her, “What was it like to work with Merce Cunningham? She said she remembers learning a great deal of complicated movement patterns, frustration, and crying. She acknowledged that Merce Cunningham does on occasion use imagery in his coaching of movement, usually taken from nature. She recalled one example in Inlets where Cunningham used the imagery of a tree.

She shared her unsettling feelings in Events, because of having to remember entrances and exits, and diversity of performance spaces. She stressed that on occasion a performance space could not accommodate dance works in the current Cunningham repertoire and Events occurred in lure of concert pieces. Woods’s favorite concert pieces to dance were Locale, Channels/Inserts, Roadrunners and most notably Pictures. She loved dancing Trails, and learned Louise Burns’ part. She danced a duet from Torsé in an Event performance.

As our interview and last conversation drew to a close Woods stressed how much she loved studying and performing Merce Cunningham’s choreographic works. She respects how
the dance technique and has been passed down from generation to generation. She is constantly amazed at the ability the dancers have in moving through space. She stated she ‘still’ gets overwhelmed when she sees Cunningham’s work. It touches her very deeply.

On Friday, October 16, 1996, Woods presented a lecture on the work of Merce Cunningham at the Wexner Center for the Arts. The lecture was a special event in honor of Cunningham’s premiere of an excerpts of Motion Capture. Woods shared that Merce Cunningham began working with the human movement animation program, LifeForm™ two years after she left the company. She shared Cunningham’s excitement in human movement potential. She shared that John Cage was Cunningham’s mentor and advisor and did not perform well in school. She stressed Cage’s interest in Schoenberg, Hindemith, and Duchamps and influence these specific individuals had on Cage’s musical philosophy and compositions. Cage’s influences were critical the Merce Cunningham’s development. She stressed the importance of metric rhythm, in addition to spatial rhythm (the use of pauses and stillness). She acknowledged the influence of the workings of the universe (organized chaos) and nature. She acknowledged the way in which Merce challenged us to see things. She stressed ‘art as purposeless play. Play was essential to the harmony of the universe. In 1944, Cunningham and Cage presented work that awakened us to the life in which we are living. Merce Cunningham’s work is playful and a celebration of the absurd, and often humorous. Merce Cunningham enjoys working in a modality that is open ended, stable and unstable.

In addressing a question from the audience regarding sound accompaniment, Woods stated that the work was so complex and difficult that we often did not hear the music, especially at premieres, where the music was performed for the first time with the dance. She felt that many times the audience was more conscious of the sound, and often found it delightful. Merce enjoyed the Zen-like approach to presenting dances- the moment the dance and music occupied the same space independent of the other.

The length of the work at the Wexner Center was twenty-two minutes and was shown as an endless loop. The work was initially created through LifeForm™, and was composed of
seventy-one movement sequences. The dancers had laser sensors placed on their body. What is interesting about this collaboration with Paul Kaiser is that before his work with Cunningham, he was a schoolteacher and worked with elementary aged children. His approach to discovery was quite ‘child-like’ and playful. It was compatible to the way in which Cunningham works. Kaiser was more interested in the process than the final product, in the doing.
APPENDIX C

CHOREOGRAPHIC TOOLS
THIRD AVENUE PERFORMANCE SPACE
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 1997
7:00 P.M.

Below is a breakdown of the various sections on the dance as seen on the videotape. We experimented with changing the order through chance procedures. As an extension of our exploration, we numbered index cards and randomly laid them out and performed the movement in the new order.

1. Arm Phrase
2. Triplets
3. Falls
4. Jillian/Lillie duet
5. Sextet (NJCIDS)
6. Narahari's Jumps over Blast dancers
7. Dice (the boys assigned movements to each number and rolled the order)
8. Boys Line
9. Duets (small)
10. Shapes (Large)
11. Slow Shapes (Lillie/Jillian center stage)
12. Sixes triplets
13. And One Phrase
14. Variations on And One phrase
14A. Jumping Phrase
15. Floor/Line...Roll On Back
17. Narahari's shapes into Chet's Solo
18. Unison Dice
19. Leg Phrase
20. Trio (Allison, Narahari, Hilary)
21. Solos
22. Unison Arm phrase
23. Running in circle
24. Floor standing phrase
25. Circle balance/triplets clockwise
26. Two lines crossing
27. Ripple two times

###
Place :1998
1. Narahari opening shape with one die in hand (the egg)
2. Arm Phrase
3. Triplet (add five OSU dancers)
4. Falls (~one OSU dancers on the run in/rearrange partners)
5. Joy and Heather's Square Duet (HARI lone figure US R)
6. Jillian & Lillie's Duet
7. Sextet Airplane (add six OSU dancers)
8. Narahari's jumps over dancers (add an additional jumper from OSU and add shape people from OSU)
9. Boys Dice
10. Rose and Karma Superheroes
11. Boys line facing the audience
12. Duet and Two Solos (Carleigh/Ben and Hari and Rose/add OSU duets)
13. Boys Shape DSL (Boys tableaus)
14. OSU Stacy begin the running section
15. Shapes (Lillie/Jillian CS, Hilary and Rose US, add three OSU dancers)
16. Sixes triplet phrase
17. OSU triplet phrases
18. Hari and Carleigh's Individual Solos
19. &1 Thematic Phrase (add five OSU dancers)
20. &1 Variations (Douglas only)
21. Duet Jumping Phrase with eight OSU dancers mixed with Douglas (16)
22. OSU dancers tableaus (HARI lone figure US R)
23. Floor/Line SR...Roll On Back SL
24. Triplet from corner into trio with Lillie, Luke, and Garth
25. Narahari's shapes into Carleigh's Solo
26. Eight Ensemble Dice (add four OSU dancers)
27. Leg Phrase (ankle knee ankle down)
28. Tree Pose into slow section into fast section
   (Stacy, Christine, Carleigh, Kelly)
29. Solos (Christine, Carleigh, Garth)
30. Unison arm phrase
31. Katherine, Daphne, and Emily's Trio (Lone figure LSR)
32. Linson running in circle
33. Floor standing & swinging leg phrase
34. Stacy and Lillie's Duet
35. Stacy and Christine's Duet
36. Circle balance into triplets clockwise
37. Christina and Myncka's Duet
38. Two lines crossing
39. Ripple two times into two-line fall into Carleigh's jumps
40. Yoga rocking sections (424 etc)
   Hannah, Laura and Sara's Trio
41. Yoga section with Carleigh/Christine/Hari/Christina/Laura
42. Runs into yoga group one, two and three
43. Linson yoga
44. Lines 1 and 2 from floor positions or from off stage
45. Lines 3 and 4 from floor positions or from off stage
46. Tree pose into slow movement phrase
47. Quick yoga phrase from standing into modified headstand
48. Into partners flying doves
49. Running/Falling section with partners
50. Scarves with shapes behind (Carleigh/Ben)
51. Leg Phrase Variation (with plie)
52. Run, Run, pause exploration
53. Sixes on the diagonals OSU, kids do flat
54. Hari's Solo
55. OSU Yoga section
56. TBA
57. Running and leaping with mixed partnering
58. TBA
59. TBA
60. Points of support with mixed partnering
61. TBA
62. TBA
63. Closure phrase one
64. Closure phrase two/ending

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640 numbers between 1 and 64

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4 23 40 27 15 13 5 42 38
26 8 53 29 41 49 3 12 20
34 11 21 22 7 25 30 39 9
47 18 46 33 37 48 50 19 1
52 51 31 6 14 2 17 28 35
53 32 24 26 45 36 43 16 38
57 44 10 27 31 56 13 42 8
60 58 15 19 41 23 34 12 4
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129
PHASE 1
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64 NUMBERS IN 2 CHASE

PLEASE # CHASE
21 PHASES FROM TOE2
64 NUMBERS IN 2 CHASE
Using coins to determine # of dances / same set or mixed /
umber of men/women

Group of 12

| MH | 1 |
| CK | 2 |
| SN | 3 |
| CR | 4 |
| CO | 5 |
| DD | 6 |
| MC | 7 |
| VSE | 8 |
| EC | 9 |
| RR | 10 |
| SHC | 11 |
| AG | 12 |

Group of 6, use 5 pennies

- 5 heads = 1 dancer
- 4 tails = 2 dancer
- 3 tails = 3 dancer
- 2 tails = 4 dancer
- 1 tail = 5 dancer
- 0 tails = 6 dancer

OR

- 0 tails = 1 dancer
- 1 tail = 2 dancer
- 2 tails = 3 dancer
- 3 tails = 4 dancer
- 4 tails = 5 dancer
- 5 tails = 6 dancer

Same set: heads = men, tails = women

Mixed: how many men/women throw # of coins to dance

Heads = women
Tails = men
Other factors to throw coins for:

- **SPACE**
  - Same heads
  - Different tails - e.g. move player to a new space - or - others are in different spaces

- **Unison**
  - Heads
  - Overlap

- **Expansion**
  - Heads
  - No Expansion tails

Where to enter:

- State Right - Heads
- State Left - Tails

Also:

- Up stage - Heads
- Down stage - Tails
- Middle - Tails
January 13, 1997

Dear Karen,

In our dance class at school we have been talking about your work with Mr. Cunningham. I had some questions about what it's like to work with him. I hope that you will have a chance to answer them.

1 - What was your relationship with Mr. Cunningham?

2 - Would you rather have choreographed the dance by yourself?

3 - Did you like how Mr. Cunningham worked?

4 - What were advantages about working with him?

5 - What were disadvantages about working with him?

6 - Did you like the company you worked for?

7 - Were you surprised that he asked you to dance with him?

8 - Do you think it's hard working the way he did?

9 - Do you like dancing where it's never the same each time?

10 - Did you like dancing with Mr. Cunningham?

11 - Did you dance with any other choreographers?

12 - Was Mr. Cunningham your favorite choreographer?

13 - If you could would you come to Douglas and watch our dance?

Thanks for thinking about my questions. I hope that you can come to Douglas and talk with us.

Sincerely Yours,

Ben Kaufman (4th Grade)
January 13, 1997

Dear Mr. Cunningham,

In our dance class at school we have been talking about your work. I had some questions and hope that you will have a chance to answer them.

1 - What gave you the idea to make separate music and dance and put them together?

2 - You have one style of choreographing that you use in a lot of your work, have you ever choreographed in other ways?

3 - How did you come up with all these different dances that let the dancers build in some of their ideas?

4 - Would you make another dance letting your dancers choreograph a dance instead of you?

5 - If you had the time, would you make up a dance for our dance class?

6 - If Mr. Cage were alive would you make another dance, but instead of working independently, would you work together?

7 - If we could show you or send you a video tape of one of our dance pieces would you give us some advice?

Thanks for thinking about my questions. I hope that you can come to Douglas and talk with us or send us a note.

Sincerely yours,

Ben Kaufman (4th Grade)
This Contract is made between TAPS and Sharon Unrau for the use of TAPS facilities on Thursday April 16, 1997.

In consideration of the mutual promises and agreements of the above mentioned parties, it is agreed as follows:

Sharon Unrau agrees to have read the TAPS Information Booklet 1996-97 (revised 8/96) and to abide by all terms listed within said Booklet. Sharon Unrau also agrees to the specifics listed below.

TAPS agrees to not alter any terms listed in the TAPS Information Booklet 1996-97 (revised 8/96) nor the below listed specifics without written consent from Sharon Unrau, as they relate to this concert.

TAPS agrees to provide the following space:
- The Sanctuary/Theatre, a dressing room, and Assembly Room (room directly at the rear of theatre) for a Performance on Wednesday, April 16, 1997, between the hours of 5:00pm and 10:00pm.

TAPS will provide the following equipment:
- The entire TAPS lighting inventory in "Rep Plot" configuration.
- The entire TAPS sound inventory

TAPS will provide the following personnel:
- Production Manager: to be in attendance during all times listed above.
- House Manager: to be in attendance during all times listed above

Sharon Unrau will provide the following:
- Box Office Personnel and Ushers (if desired)
- Full payment of all fees due no later than Wednesday April 16, 1997.

FEES-
SPACE FEE:
Sharon Unrau agrees to pay the fee of $40, no later than Wednesday April 16, 1997, for the above mentioned space and equipment. This fee will be made out to Third Avenue Community Church, and handed to the Production Manager. This fee reflects the total cost of $140 for space and equipment minus the $100 non-refundable security deposit which has been received.

PERSONNEL FEE:
Sharon Unrau agrees to pay the following individual personnel fees no later than Wednesday April 16, 1997, for their work during the above listed times:
- Production Manager: John Bohuslawsky $50

Sharon Unrau is solely responsible for all copyrights necessary for the work presented.

Third Avenue Community Church will provide a food related concession stand at its discretion.

This agreement is binding and agreed to by:

______________________________  _____________
TAPS Representative         Date

______________________________  _____________
Sharon Unrau            Date
To: YLD Pittsburgh Participants
From: Sharon Unrau
Re: Trip to Pittsburgh, PA
Date: Tuesday, December 2, 1997

Those participating in the Pittsburgh trip to attend the Merce Cunningham Dance Concert FYI the following: tickets have been sent to me and I will keep them at school unless asked to do otherwise. For those riding in vans, we will depart from Douglas at 1:00 p.m. Individuals interested in a pre-concert chat should contact me ASAP. We will attend the 'artist-talk-back' immediately following the concert. In case of emergency, parents may call my cell telephone at (614) 361.0404 or the Byham Theatre directly between 7:00 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. on Friday, December 5th, 1997.

Three vans are driving to Pittsburgh. All vans will depart from Douglas at 1:00 p.m. Pack a snack and bring money for dinner (McDonald's). Parents are required to make pick-up arrangements with their dancer's van driver prior to Wednesday, December 3rd.

#1 Sharon Unrau; Lillie Boggs, Rose Trover, Christine Glass, Hanna Michael-Swartz, and Janice Swartz (6)

#2 Helen Bolte; Laura Bolte, Cynthia Murphy, Samantha Murphy, Sara Dzywonyz, and Narahari Luke (6)

#3 Michele Gagan; Christina Gagan, Carla Franklin, Ashley Franklin (4)

The following individuals are attending the concert in Pittsburgh with us, but are transporting independently: Donna Fairchild, Carleigh Fairchild, and The Lins (4).

Parents must communicate with their students' classroom teacher regarding early dismissal on Friday, December 5th, 1997. Please return the form below to the classroom teacher by Wednesday, December 3rd, 1997.

__________________________________________

has permission to attend the concert in Pittsburgh, PA on Friday, December 5th, 1997. My child is riding with __________________________. I am aware that we are leaving directly from Douglas School at 1:00 p.m. following lunch. I have arranged with my child's driver for pick-up. I will be __________________________ from ____________ and can be reached by telephone at __________________________ if needed.
Dear Sharon,

I loved the dance Friday night! The kids looked great and their enthusiasm was contagious. It was obvious to everyone that you and the children had worked hard to bring the pieces together. When Rose Trover talked about her “experience” with dance in that mature tone of hers, I started thinking about what you said. That is, that college students would be joining your group for the New York Trip. I wondered if it would be possible to have the adult dancers be stationery, perhaps in elongated, statue-type poses during the opening pieces. I noticed that the kids were fairly flying through most of the first sections! The dances reminded me of a life cycle... how we start out at a fast pace and, eventually slow down as we mature. I visualized adults (dressed in black) as pillars and protectors of the dancing children. I thought about how adults that are tuned into children can guide them and show them how many talents they do have, how many roads they can travel.

The wonderful thing is that as children grow up (in all their randomness!) they do become come more grounded, more set, more conscious of their place in the world. In some ways, reaching out to adult dancers could signify the yearning for maturity. On the other hand, I also know that as I reach maturity, the pace of some things has quickened. We both understand how grad school in general caused us to speed up! I thought about this in terms of The Dance. As the piece goes along, the children naturally slowed down, the poses became more limited as they tired. This could be the signal for the adult dancers to begin their fast moves. It could also indicate that The Dance of life is never over, but that the roles do change. The biographical information about Merce really seems to embody that idea — that creation of any kind is an elixir for youth. He seems to be the kind of person that is always on the lookout for new ideas. 72 is probably just a number to him, not an indicator that life is slowing.

I'm willing to bet that he is a student of the New Science and, in particular, the Chaos Theory. Simply put, the theory describes a system of standing together, reaching out, and supporting that which is moving toward wholeness. Some of the research I've been doing was made tangible through the children's movements Friday night. What may appear random and chaotic to some is really a search for autonomy made visible. That is an intriguing idea to me. Your dance reflects the openness and inquiry that I think makes learning and teaching at Douglas special.

I could go on, and hope to, when you and I have a moment to talk, but for now I wanted to let you know how affected I was. I read a wonderful poem by T.S. Eliot in which he says, "There is only the dance." ("Four Quartets" 1943). What he means, I
think, is that all life moves toward coherence and it is the only dance which brings us joy. Helping the children and the audience recognize that inter dependencies make the dance worth doing makes everyone stronger. It was a joy to see that concept expressed in full view.

Check out the "View from Saturday" by E.L. Konigsburg. It's a literary look at the period our children were dancing in and out of -- childhood and adolescence. It's a children's book that has a lot to say about finding self. It is a different kind of dance toward wholeness.

Sharon, please let me know if I can help the troupe in any other way. For now, I am hoping these reflections that I am sharing with you may provoke other avenues of thought, just as your dance evoked them for me.

still thinking!!

Sue

P.S. I sat next to Diane Nance, Claire's mom, at the show. I'm wondering if she might have some funding resources for the NYC trip. I know that's her field -- funding artists. I'll talk to her this week and see what gives.
To: Parents/Guardians of YLD

From: Sharon Linrau

Re: Performance at OSU, College of the Arts

Date: Tuesday, January 27, 1998

The Douglas YearLong Dancers (YLD) have been invited to perform at The Ohio State University's College of the Arts. The performance is Friday, February 6th, beginning from 12:30 p.m. - 1:18 p.m. We will leave school at 12:00 noon, after eating lunch in our learning communities. We will return at 1:45 p.m. We will wear the concert white costumes.

As in November, we will dance the first half of the dance (up to the yoga section). Dancers involved in the first half of the dance will perform. The week of February 2nd is dedicated to the study of Merce Cunningham and his colleagues (John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, et al) in the class. The Arts 161 course is a basic education elective that brings a diverse group of students into a single learning experience.

Please return by Wednesday, January 28th, 1998.

________________________________________

__________ has permission to participate in the performance/sharing at The Ohio State University on Friday, February 6th from 12:30 p.m. - 1:18 p.m.

______ My dancer DOES/DOES NOT transportation to OSU on February 6th.

______ I can drive _________ students to and from OSU on February 6th.

______ My daughter/son CAN NOT attend on Friday, February 6th.

____________ Home phone ______________ work phone __________ pager/cell

________________________________________ Parent/Guardian signature
19 March 1998

David Vaughan, Archivist
Cunningham Dance Foundation
55 Bethune Street
New York City, New York 10014

Dear Mr. Vaughan,

Thank you for your letter of March 12 and your swift reply regarding the performance at the Cunningham Studio. The first task I completed was to learn the correct spelling of your last name. My sincere apologies. It spelled correctly in my dissertation bibliography. In reference to the children's performances, if your schedule permits you are welcome to attend dress rehearsal on Thursday evening beginning at 8:00 p.m.

Regarding the Cunningham Foundation Archives, thank you for offering the opportunity. I am particularly interested in the techniques utilized in Merce Cunningham's creative process; e.g. chance procedures, meaning, movement, and Eastern influences such as Zen and Yoga. My research includes a secondary component on the implementation of LifeForms™ in the choreographic process. Though I don't envision researching a great deal on dance and technology, LifeForms™ played an important role in the initial phrases of my study two years ago. I hope to spend a week in NYC this summer. If time permits, I should explore the secondary area too.

Thank you for the recommendation on your book *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years*. I was fortunate to receive a preview copy in early September of 1997 directly from the publisher. I agree, the book is an excellent resource. In addition, I have read a copy of *Merce Cunningham: Creative Elements*, the issue edited by you and published by the Hardwood Academic Publishers. I am very interested in looking at videos in the video archives, and will speak with Anna Brown and make an appointment for this summer.

The children and I begin our journey to New York City on April 22nd. As requested, I will phone you at your office when we arrive at the hotel. Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely

Sharon Unrau
To: Parents of YLD

From: Sharon Linna

Re: Rehearsal Schedule Update

Date: Tuesday, March 31, 1998

Thursday, April 2 6-8 p.m. Open Rehearsal/Performance

*An 'Open Rehearsal' is a full-run of the piece from beginning-to-end with an audience watching. It is a performance. No jewelry. Wear all black. Be on time and focused. Performers are welcome to invite family and friends to observe the rehearsal. Audience members are requested to enter the rehearsal space quietly by 6:00 p.m. and remain seated. No food or beverages are to be brought into the building. (Note: I cut the remaining rehearsal times in half. Be on time and ready to go. If 'everyone' arrives by 6:00 p.m., we will walk out the door into 'Beautiful Spring' at 7:00 p.m.)*

Tuesday, April 7 6-7 p.m. Run of Piece/Costume Fitting
(Ladies and gents please wear appropriate undergarments)

Thursday, April 9 canceled—CPS Early Release

Tuesday, April 14 canceled—CPS Spring Break
Thursday, April 16 canceled—CPS Spring Break
(I can be reached at home at 785-xxxx during break)

FINALLY! Performance Trip to NYC Week:

Monday, April 20 rehearsal 6:00 p.m.
Parent/Dancer meeting in gym 7:00 p.m.
(REQUIRED parent meeting: telephone tree set-up and use will be discussed in addition to final details of trip)

Tuesday, April 21 Performance at Douglas 1:30 p.m.
Performance at Sullivant Hall, OSU
Dress Rehearsal at 3:00 p.m. (Stacy)
Dress Rehearsal at 6:00 p.m. (Douglas/OSU)
Pre-Concert Chat for Audience, 7:00 p.m. in 15th Ave. Rotunda
Performance at 8:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 22 Arrive at Douglas at 6:45 p.m. to load bus
Leave for NYC at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 26 Return to Douglas approximately 12:00 p.m. The telephone tree will begin one hour from our arrival. It is VITAL that parents 'reachable' by telephone beginning at 10:00 a.m.
Day 1

7:30 am - Wednesday, April 22, 1998
7:30 pm - 1-55 Passenger Lakefront Lines arrives
8:00 pm - Depart Douglas Elementary, Columbus OH for NYC
pm - Travel overnight/ relief driver requested

Day 2

7:30 am - Thursday, April 23, 1998
7:30 am - $5.00 cash provided for breakfast
am - "Today Show" window
1:00 pm - NBC Studio tour also 1:15 & 1:30 pm
pm - Central Park to relax and eat bag lunch from home
pm - Walking tour of Fifth Avenue/ St Patrick's
pm - Cathedral, FAO Swart, Broadway and more
pm - Register at the Downtown Athletic Club
pm - Pizza at the hotel / Battery Cafe (425-1555)
6:30 pm - Warm up at Merce Cunningham Studio
6:30 pm - Dress rehearsal at studio
8:00 pm - Return to the hotel
11:00 pm - Private night supervision / on duty 7 hours

Day 3

7:30 am - Friday, April 24, 1998
7:30 am - $5.00 cash provided for breakfast
8:30 am - Depart for Battery Park
am - Group lines up for ferry to Liberty Island
am - Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island
am - Ferry returns to Battery Park
12:30 pm - $10 cash provided for lunch / South Street Seaport
2:30 pm - Empire State Building
5:00 pm - Dinner at Confetti Past
6:30 pm - Group arrives at the theater
8:00 pm - Performance
pm - Return to the hotel
11:00 pm - Private night supervision begins / on duty 7 hours

Day 4

am - Saturday, April 25, 1998
Group name: DOUGLAS ALT ELEMENTARY
Destination: NEW YORK CITY

FINAL ITINERARY
04/22/98 to 04/26/98

08:30 am - Check out of the hotel
10:00 am - Metropolitan Museum of Art
02:00 pm - Visit to Chinatown
05:00 pm - $10.00 cash provided for dinner
06:30 pm - Arrive at the Theater
08:00 pm - Performance
11:00 pm - Depart for home / travel overnight

Day 5

08:00 am - Meals enroute at the group's expense
11:00 am - Estimated arrival home

Your group will be staying at the NEW YORK ATHLETIC CLUB
212-425-7000 Fax: 212-952-1473

Your group's bus transportation will be provided by LAKEFRONT LINES INC
1 bus(es) have been reserved for your group.
800/638-6338 X 126 FAX: 216/362-3796
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