



## Experience Every Moment: Aesthetically significant dance education

Fiona Bannon & Patricia Sanderson

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## *Experience Every Moment: aesthetically significant dance education*

FIONA BANNON, *Dance in the School of Arts, University College Scarborough, University of York, University College Scarborough, Filey Road, North Yorkshire YO11 3AZ, UK*  
(e-mail: [fionab@ucscarb.ac.uk](mailto:fionab@ucscarb.ac.uk))

PATRICIA SANDERSON, *Faculty of Education, University of Manchester, University of Manchester, Faculty of Education, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, UK*  
(e-mail: [patriciasanderson@man.ac.uk](mailto:patriciasanderson@man.ac.uk))

**ABSTRACT** *This paper describes the breadth of emerging issues and concerns from an ongoing qualitative research study into dance education. The initial focus of the study has been to review the nature of aesthetic experiences in dance education, aiming to promote a coherent view of dance education as a distinct and humanising pedagogy. Central to this approach is the development of the individual through increased aesthetic awareness, whereby opportunities are offered for the enhancement of reasoning processes with increasing perceptual and conceptual range in an atmosphere of exploration. In support of this, the concept of the aesthetic and its relevance to dance as part of an arts or humanities education profile is examined. The discussion proceeds with an exploration of the teaching and learning involved in aesthetically significant dance education, reviewing ways forward for research in dance education, by means of dance creation, performance and appreciation. The paper concludes by urging the adoption of a broad approach to qualitative research methodology, to investigate the issues revealed by the ongoing research study.*

### **Introduction**

Informed by feminist theorists of education and learning (Oakley, 1981; Shrewsbury, 1987; Weiler, 1988, 1991; Lather, 1991; Reinharz, 1992; Ellsworth, 1992; Middleton, 1993), this paper describes emerging issues and concerns from an ongoing research study. The main focus of the study is to promote a coherent view of dance as a distinct and humanising pedagogy. Central to this approach is the development of the individual through increased aesthetic awareness, attending to notions of empowerment and potential in an evolving sense of community. The concept of education adopted is of a process of 'futuring', after the work of Greene (1988), whereby individuals are offered opportunities for the development of reasoning processes with increasing perceptual and

conceptual range in an atmosphere of exploration. This approach fosters greater freedoms for people, moving away from blind loyalties, obedience to slogans, rhetoric, or mass emotion. Acknowledging that this may appear to some an idealistic approach does not necessarily mean it is inappropriate. Dance education is promoted here as having the potential to offer focused, conscious, aesthetic and artistic experience, with the aesthetic seen as a constitutive feature of the human species, a trait that can be explored and enhanced in and through an education.

The paper is divided into three broad sections. The first reviews the 'placing' of dance in the physical education curriculum in the UK, alongside recent calls for re-evaluation and change instigated by dance education practitioners in the UK and elsewhere. In support of these calls, the second section focuses on an understanding of the concept of the aesthetic, and its relevance to dance as part of an arts or humanities education profile. The final section considers the teaching and learning involved in aesthetically significant dance education and is subdivided into the three principle divisions used in dance curriculum documents: creation, performance and appreciation. It closes with a review of issues emerging in dance academia that are relevant to the future development of research studies in dance education.

## Dance Education

In tracing the history of the development of dance education by authors such as H'Doubler (1957), Redfern (1972) and Haynes (1987), a curious mix of opportunism and pragmatism is apparent. Dance education has undergone numerous changes in content and identity, varying from the 'physical training' of the 1920s and self-expression of the 1960s, to the formal performance models of the 1970s. The erratic nature of this profile was revealed in UK research undertaken by Meakin and Sanderson (1983), which identified variations in experiences of teachers and students of dance at secondary school level. Wide differences were revealed in title, content, and aims of dance education practice, from 'creative' to 'modern educational dance', 'educational' and 'modern dance'. A spectrum from free self-expression to formal choreographic craft was evident in dance teaching that showed little coherence (Meakin & Sanderson, 1983, pp. 70–71).

With the eventual consolidation of dance as part of the National Physical Education Curriculum of England and Wales in 1988 (DES, 1989, 1991), the positive and negative educational fortunes of dance are retained in its 'traditional' link to physical education. Sanderson (1996) records that many dance specialist teachers now maintain that the relationship should be severed, a view often reported by the National Dance Teachers Association (NDA) (1990) and Lyons (1997). The Association has consistently presented the argument to successive British governments that 'the concepts employed in dance education place emphasis on artistic, aesthetic and cultural learning' (NDA, 1990, p. 2), very different from the tone of the physical education documents in which it is placed. Henderson (1991) argues that the National Curriculum presents a mixture of aims and objectives for dance education taken from an historical perspective, and that it does not reflect developments within the profession in recent decades. If this

diagnosis is correct, the negative effect for dance education may be considerable. For education managers, an essentially 'practical' approach to dance justifies its location in physical education, where, at worst, content may be reduced to motor skill coordination and competition. The Secretary of State for England in 1991 endorsed this point by arguing that he saw no reason for three attainment targets in physical education and that one would suffice, reflecting the practical nature of the subject (Clarke, 1991).

The potential benefits of the link between the two disciplines, dance and physical education, remain largely under-explored in the UK, in contrast with the Australian Education Council (1994a,b,c,d), which promotes the inclusion of dance in arts and human sciences programmes of study. Similarly Minchinton (1997) discusses the positive effects of working in the Department of Human Movement, Recreation and Performance at the University of Melbourne.

The situation in the UK may in part be explained by a political and cultural reluctance to accept the value, or even the existence, of the knowledge embodied in dance experience. Although Curl (1991, p. 10) concludes unequivocally that 'The assumption that there is little or no knowledge, understanding and skill outside the category of the purely practical is manifestly not the case', this has not yet met with general agreement. With the review of the National Curriculum by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, underway at the time of writing and due to be in place by September 2000, the hope remains for some that there may be positive developments in favour of change. Jobbins (1999) expresses concern that the fundamental issue of the placement of dance in the curriculum was not to be addressed during the review. However, in what is a positive and forward-looking article she does reveal what appear to be more substantial and coherent discussions addressing the distinctiveness of physical education and dance.

Arguments for the re-evaluation of educational aims and teaching practices in dance are presented in the work of many feminist dance educators, including Shapiro (1998), Stinson (1984, 1993) and Marques (1995). Aspects of the critical or 'liberatory' education theory of Freire (1971, 1985) underpin much of their work. Freire (1985) promotes the denunciation of oppressive structures in education, inspiring review of the role of assessment, review of the abuse of authoritarian control structures, and the promotion of increased access to resources. He supports the development of new forms of relationships and validation of experience with the ultimate aim of 'humanisation'.

Such reflections upon the nature of educational experience have resulted in challenges to the dualistic tradition of Western knowledge systems, in order to promote the identity of the individual as the centre of education. The accepted 'traditional' split between activities of reasoning and the activities of what may be called 'sensing selves' has ongoing political implications for the position of dance as an academic discipline. A dualistic approach, whereby the use of the body is considered of lower status than the cognitive functions of language and logic, is unwittingly presented in much of the literature of dance, particularly the technical training manuals. The often-heard instructions to 'just move, don't think' or, 'feel, don't think' promote a belief in an idea of partial engagement, with negative repercussions for the fortunes of dance. The political opposition to the position of dance in education continues, despite the invaluable contributions made to the debate by educational philosophers such as Best (1978, 1986,

1992), Redfern (1983) and McFee (1992, 1994), who have clarified many fundamental concepts and issues.

The situation is not new: Dewey (1934, p. 263), for instance, emphasised how habits in the use of language need to change. He suggested that ‘mind’ should be thought of primarily as a verb, emphasising the breadth of experiences, because it denotes the varied ways ‘... in which we deal consciously and expressly with the situations in which we find ourselves’. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty (1963) suggests that it is the nature of limitation imposed by the present development of linguistic constructs that has reinforced the view of the body as material substance, moved by something other than itself, i.e. a ‘mind’. Whether it is the limited development of language systems, or complicit habits of oppression, the perception that knowledge can be validated within our subjective reality has not been fully addressed in education. On a positive note, there is an increasing literature that supports the views proposed by theorists such as Merleau-Ponty, Dewey, and Bergson (1946). The following are offered as examples of theorists and practitioners whose work illustrates the range of what can be called somatic practices: Hanna (1988), Moore (1989), Johnson (1995), Green (1995), Karczaga (1996), Franklin (1996) and White (1997). All of these authors emphasise that physical experiences of the world have formative roles in our conception of reality.

### The Aesthetic Concept

Reviewing literature that addresses meanings of the concept of the aesthetic reveals a wide range in the use, and apparent misuse, of the term. The result is often a sense of increased mystification, followed by suspicion of its potential contribution to education. The term ‘aesthetic’ is often used in conjunction with art, but more usually as a free-floating signifier of ‘quality’. The trend to view ‘aesthetic’ as a set of rules, or as an alternative word for abstract concepts such as ‘beauty’, ‘harmony’, or ‘grace’, has dominated Western cultural tradition.

The German philosopher Baumgarten first employed the term ‘aesthetic’ as recently as 1750, although statements addressing the essence of the concept trace the historical lineage to antiquity. Baumgarten identified *cognitio sensitiva* (sensitive cognition), giving it the Graeco-Latin name *cognitio aesthetica*. His work retained the philosophic tradition of a distinction between cognition and sensation, although he did relate aspects of intellect and sensation within his writings, at least in the realm of beauty. Tatarkiewicz (1980) details the history of the concept, revealing many changes from the aesthetic objectivity of Plato, where beauty was considered to be in the nature of an object and yet aligned with a special capacity of the soul to perceive; to the aesthetic subjectivity of the 18th century of Kant and Hume, placing beauty in the mind that contemplates an object. Essentially, the present use of the term is derived from an adaptation of the Greek word ‘*aisthanomai*’, meaning ‘to perceive’, although the development of the concept of ‘taste’ ultimately transformed its use. By the mid-18th century it was thought that not all things were capable of evoking a sensation of aesthetic satisfaction and that careful consideration was needed to address worthy subjects, a position since refuted. Arguably, this is where the assumed close relationship between art, aesthetics and ‘good taste’ was established.

Reid (1969) and Eisner (1982), along with many theorists, argue for a distinction to be made between aesthetic and art, namely, that 'art' is concerned with the creation of an artefact, whereas 'aesthetic' is concerned with the experience that may be secured from relating to such an artefact. Reid (1969) and Abbs (1989) both describe the nature of an aesthetic experience in terms of a relationship with an object, without it having to be an art object, a view promoting the aesthetic as separate from the artistic. Similarly, Korsmeyer (1977) argues that it is the acknowledgement and application of this distinction between the two concepts that is needed. Until this division is made clear, she suggests that the concept of the aesthetic will continue to be abused and remain vague and ill defined.

The sense of distance or 'disinterest' promoted by Kant, and earlier by Aristotle, has been an important distinction of aesthetic experience; it is, however, considered to be misleading in language and intention by an increasing number of theorists, for example, Dissanayake (1988) and Eaton (1994). Whilst the notions of non-judgementalism and dispassionate criticism are intrinsically stable, these authors argue that aesthetic experience is diminished and possibly missed, if not placed in a context of other human concerns, whether political, moral, religious or economic. Dissanayake (1992, p. xix) takes what for some is a more fundamental stance arguing that:

... the aesthetic is not something added to us, learned or acquired like speaking a second language ... but in large measure is the way we are ...

She suggests that as a species, humans are predisposed to active engagement in making sense of individual and collective experience. Perception is an active process of searching for order, pattern, form, and structure in a simultaneously cognitive, emotional and operational manner. There will be multiple variations in such experiences, as there will be in the attention given to the experience by individuals. The source of the differences in experience is both biological and culturally reinforced. Fraleigh (Fraleigh & Hanstein, 1999, p. 190) argues on similar grounds for an essential understanding of aesthetics as being, '... founded in our senses, realized through our living body in its wholeness, actualized in our words, our work, and daily life'. Through this complex networking, information both external and internal is filtered into understandings and the 'pleasure' of lived experiences.

Broudy (1972), Greger (1972), Simpson (1985) and Smith (1989, 1995), working in the field of aesthetic education, promote its role as the expansion of our perceptual powers and the cultivation of that sensibility which leads to direct apprehension of the world in which we live. The formative educational philosophies of Dewey (1934), who evolved a view of education as a process of experience, growth, experiment and transaction, are evident here. Greene (1988, p. 22) encapsulates many similar ideas when arguing that education be conceptualised as 'a process of futuring, of releasing persons to become different, of provoking persons to repair lacks and to take action to create themselves'. For theorists such as Reid (1969), Eisner (1982), Abbs (1989) and Smith (1995), it is by means of art education that such aesthetic encounters are intentionally activated, encompassing more than surface phenomena, moving into the realms of expressive and symbolic meanings.

The development of such perception through experience in dance education is a

challenge for students and teachers, and an area in need of research into the relationship between aesthetic theory and dance practice. It is a vital element of human experience assisting the formulation of interpretation, intent, future action and importantly 'present experience'. The manner of such interpretation affects both the producer and consequent products in multidimensional ways. During earlier work (Bannon, 1993, 1994, 1997) it became evident that 'prestigious' aesthetic development research has taken place in the field of visual art (Gardner, 1973, 1981, 1982, 1988; Gardner & Perkins, 1989; Parsons, 1987, 1988, 1994), resulting in categorical use of 'stage development' theory; however, little has been done in dance. Identifying the development of aesthetic awareness as an important aim of the curriculum would promote the exploration of notions of context, purpose, relevance, form and content throughout the medium of dance. Conceived in this way, aesthetic awareness does not have to be seen as something transcendental, concerned only with appreciation and/or criticism.

A state of 'wide awakesness', after the work of Schutz (1967), where a level of consciousness, originality, leadership and reflectiveness are forged, becomes a vision of what may be realised in dance education. Studying dance can incorporate, for example, reviewing the role of the dancer/person, the identity and nature of a work, as well as its spatial, dynamic and cultural dimensions. By relating such elements through praxis, theory and practice are integrated to generate and continually transform each other, alongside opportunities to evolve critical, imaginative, appreciative and perceptive abilities. Lavender (1997) has extended the debate into the teaching of choreography by addressing similar objectives to those mentioned here; he emphasises the employment of critical reflection, and articulate, dispassionate judgement, balancing creativity with informed reflection. The transferability of practice in these 'life skills' across a broad range of experiences is an important instrumental feature of dance education experiences.

### **Aesthetically Significant Dance Education**

There appears to be an assumption in many dance texts and curriculum documents that an automatic consequence of any education in dance will be enhanced aesthetic awareness. If this 'aesthetic awareness' does indeed underpin aspects of the distinctive nature of dance education, how may it be recognised and what does the experience provide? Little is revealed in the National Physical Education Curriculum of England and Wales, for example. Furthermore, there is little work that could be said to accurately describe aesthetic development in dance or related fields. Van Gyn and O'Neill (1991) argue for aesthetic development to be considered an integral part of all aspects of dance education. Such development, they claim, is shown by students in their ability to communicate through skilful manipulation of symbol systems, choreography and body use for aesthetic and artistic purposes. Whilst the main thrust of their argument is supportable for the breadth of their intentions, it does raise interesting questions concerning the 'translatability' of experience found in dance. Is it appropriate to assume that dance experiences can be translated into language in any 'authentic' sense? Is daily experience and reflection achieved through words, or more closely through images? It is an intriguing situation for dance educators, to address the need for

academic assessment procedures that move away from written and spoken language, into an engagement with the individual concerned. The versatility shown by dance educators in the past may be an important feature of the future of the discipline, as once again the value of person-centred education and alternative modes of assessment become apparent, a point to be taken up later in the paper.

Reid (1982) suggests that aesthetic development may be considered as a growth of the ability to respond relevantly to a work of art as an aesthetic object, which is a useful and usable approach. Although the direct association with art is somewhat limiting in the broader understanding of the potential of the aesthetic, the notion of *responding relevantly* to an experience would seem to be a crucial aspect of growth in aesthetic awareness.

With the acceptance of the notion that aesthetic experiences can be encountered beyond the realm of art, the next step is to reach beyond what can be considered an identifiable 'object'. The location or source of aesthetic experience is particularly relevant for those involved in the art form of dance that, by its very nature, 'disappears' or is at least in a continual state of flux. An interesting diversion would be to consider the impact of developments on the World Wide Web, video, film and cyber technologies, and the place of the 'vancer' (virtual dancer), all of which reinforce earlier concerns about the location and nature of aesthetic experience.

The past two decades have seen the broad adoption by dance educators in the UK at all levels of compulsory education of a curriculum that incorporates performance, creation and appreciation, placing equal emphasis on the processes of experience and the resultant products. Smith-Autard (1994, pp. 4–5), naming this as the 'midway model', promotes it as an amalgamation of elements from earlier, 'educational' and 'professional' models, with a distinctiveness that lies '... in the concept of the art of dance in education contributing towards artistic education, aesthetic education and cultural education'. The National Curriculum documentation reveals similar approaches across a number of other arts disciplines, although the actual attainment target in physical education is severely limited in this respect (DFE, 1995). The evident variation between official documentation and the depth and quality of teaching practised in dance reinforces the misplacing of dance within physical education.

Best (1978, 1986, 1989, 1990, 1992), Adshead (1981, 1988), Redfern (1983, 1986), Stinson (1984), Preston-Dunlop (1991, 1998), Lord *et al.* (1994), Lord (1997), Fortin (1994), McFee (1994), Smith-Autard (1994) and Shapiro (1998) have been instrumental in calling for structural redefinition of the discipline. The message of these dance practitioners and researchers is that so-called 'intuitive understanding', often praised in dance as a route to 'self-expression', is an inadequate mechanism for the delivery of sustainable quality in education. Best (1989) suggests that many arts educators are themselves the source of confusion and misdirection within aesthetic education, because of the insistence of placing the emphasis of their work, and therefore their students' work, on subjective feelings. What, therefore, may be regarded as seminal to the creation of coherent and aesthetically significant dance education?

A primary consideration is the nature of dance as an art and an educational discipline. Expanding on the earlier idea of dance as a focused, conscious, aesthetic and artistic activity, experience in dance offers a distinct form of communication separate from the



expressive statements of direct speech. Dance artists create work that is unique, conceived as the production of a new situation. One interpretation of the basis of dance is the experience of an individual existing in, and as, space and time. Movements, location, sound and rhythm cause effects in space and the consequent interconnections are one way of conceiving what is experienced as dance. Donaldson (1994, p. 97) argues succinctly that dance works are essentially ‘... dynamic reticulated complexes, in which all component elements and structures take on an interactive role’. The nature of this interrelatedness and co-dependence of multiple aspects of dance, in process and product, as performer, creator or viewer, creates a dynamic and fluid art form. When further layered with cultural, historic, economic and political considerations, an apt appreciation of the notion proposed by Reid (1969) that works of art can be seen as ‘meaningful’, rather than ‘meaning something’, becomes apparent.

### *Dance Creation*

A fundamental premise of this paper is that dance education can be viewed as part of a humanising pedagogy. To clarify what this might mean, boundaries of what may be regarded as capable of being ‘taught’ need examination. Two views of ‘creativity’ in dance, from opposing ends of a spectrum, highlight an inherent problem of delivery. One suggests ‘skilling’ that can be shown, learned, and acted upon, in a sense ‘apprenticed’. This approach is evident in many curriculum documents and is in operation throughout the ‘professional training’ sector. The other extreme suggests that direct ‘skilling’ cannot or should not be taught, thereby leaving all creative work to innate sensitivity and intuitive feeling.

The work of Shahn (1957) in the field of visual art goes some way to bridging the chasm. He describes what can be taken as parameters to guide students in creating work. He refers to the form of a ‘work’ as a disciplined approach to the ordering of content, and that it is this that gives the work its identity. Recognising the scope of an idea, manipulating relevant materials and reflecting upon results are the essential experiences a teacher can share with a student, throughout the discipline. The idea of revelation and reflection in order to inform future action can be identified as sharing many of the features discussed earlier, in reviewing notions of aesthetic education. For example, in choreographic exploration several facets of the discipline are united, bringing together experiences of improvisation, analysis, history, socio-cultural studies and technical awareness, to create aesthetically significant art. Many of these points are positively reinforced by the *Dance in Schools* document, published by the Arts Council of Great Britain (1993). In union with these issues of content, research by Lord (1986) emphasises that approaches to teaching can also have fundamental influences on the perceived and actual educational success of students at whatever level. Her conclusions promote the active encouragement of engagement by teachers of students; clarity, structure and enthusiasm in delivery of information; reduction in the reliance on the overt use of discipline; the adaptation of content to the student group rather than the disassociation of information. Collinson (1973) and Simpson (1985) endorse strategies of teaching where the teacher leads students through focused discussion and revelation.

Many courses in choreography are guided by the belief that students should continu-

ously create work, and that only by doing so can they come to understand the complexity and craft of dance. Whilst the challenge of making dances is important, it is nevertheless part of a process; dance-makers need to relate experiences gained in the 'whole' discipline and not see creation as separate. Choreography is part of dance as education and art, viewed through the complex cultural, economic, and political influences on societies. There are many 'traditional forms' in dance construction which students can experience. There are personalities, in the sense of experienced artists, providing works and approaches to practice that can be discussed, reviewed and analysed. There is opportunity to organise works according to common attributes, whether by theme, movement vocabulary, social context, or notions of style or technological exploration.

Traditional notions of choreography are challenged by the structuring of work in the continual interplay of artistic exploration, and aesthetic sensitivity found in improvisation. Improvisation is not necessarily about walking into a room and beginning to move, although it could be. Experienced improvisers bring to their work knowledge and self-awareness developed from many occasions, all of which will contribute to the creation of a work. The degree of preparation and scrutiny should not be thought of as less, because the desired outcomes are process driven. Forti (1997a,b) uses what might be called 'action writing' to attune her potential creative focus prior to an improvised performance. Her intention is to enliven her creative self in order to access and facilitate a sense of balance, harmony and structure in her work. The momentary creations can be experienced as a conscious act of preparation moving into the creation of art as process.

There is a need for a new consensus on the part of the dance education community to accommodate the distinctive features of dance improvisation as a contributory element of dance education. The challenge is to formulate modes of inquiry and assessment that address the learning that is achieved during the process rather than as a result of the process. Improvisation as exploration and/or performance represents the unifying of the immateriality of the created image, and the very material nature of the body-mind, in a unique intensity of presence. The dancer, creator and audience are parts of the momentary construction of conscious experience in real time. For many individuals this inclusive sense of artistic experience may be unacceptable; for example, Dissanayake (1992) notes that Danto (1986, p. 209) bemoans that 'We have entered a period of art so absolute in its freedom that art seems but a name for an infinite play with its own concept'. The scope of understanding of the concept of art, the breadth of hybridisation in performance alongside the ephemeral nature of dance, make the once radical and revolutionary causes of improvisation into a logical progression in the artistic and aesthetic propensities of dance education.

Copeland (1994), in a paper which reflects upon the issues of revival and reconstruction in dance, highlights a view taken by many that the evanescence of dance should be considered its blessing and not a curse. The current demands of the examination system rely on choreographic models and score recreations as evidence of production, with less attention being given to the quality of ongoing experiences in the art form. Halprin (1994) fosters an approach to this kind of work as the discovery of individual qualities, similar to the approach evident in theories of Laban (1956), who urged the primary

development of the potential to access every imaginable movement before the making of choices. There are those (Jacobs, 1990) who suggest that each performance of a work should be thought of as a new work, similar to the ideas of ‘instantiation’, from the work of Danto and earlier Dewey.

Rubidge (1997), in a discussion of ‘open works’, suggests that they afford a framework of ‘potentialities’, not a set of predetermined, prearranged elements. She promotes the essential characteristic of dance as fluidity of form, not as the perceptible sameness often thought securing for the spectator and assessor. Building on a sense of such fluidity, it is plausible to argue that dance improvisation encapsulates the essential nature of dance as an art form. Dance improvisation is an engagement in the manipulation of the potentialities of form, open to the instantaneous moment of creation and performance. How can we actively accommodate such experimental and experiential theories in dance education?

### *Dance Performance*

Supporting the call for re-evaluation of purpose and direction in dance education are somatic theories that challenge long-standing dualistic arguments. The term ‘Somatica’ addresses a collection of methods that share a basic concept, outlined by Kovich (1994, p. 212), that habits of thinking and moving are inextricably related and influenced by the physical and social circumstances in which we, as individuals, develop and mature. There is currently little evidence of the impact of somatic theories in mainstream dance education or ‘training’ institutions. Research by Green (1993), in the US, and Fortin (1994), in Canada, however, suggests that some teachers are creating new generic dance technique teaching approaches, which prioritise the sensing of the body–self. The integration of somatic methods into dance education could have a profound effect on the practice of the discipline. Somatic systems such as the Alexander Technique, Body–Mind Centring and Kinetic Awareness offer informed intuitive, internalised approaches to neuromuscular exploration, aiding the discovery of the self that Damasio (1994, p. 100) defines as a ‘perpetually re-created neurobiological state’. These systems provide alternative methods of education, for dancers to evolve as versatile and focused individuals, across all the aspects of dance experience. In a discipline that focuses clearly on bodily experience, the close association of the aesthetic with bodily sensation should not be overlooked. A deepening understanding of physicality should not be ruled out as a distinctive factor in dance education.

The integration of these methods into dance education is the result of a change of consciousness in attitude to persons, to moving, to performance and to the creation of works. Dancers are presented with the opportunity to achieve knowledge of themselves as ‘moving thinkers’, rather than being ‘grooved’ into the invariable principles afforded by other technique based traditions. There are, of course, examples where dance training does not generate any sense of individualism: it would be foolish to suggest that all who teach dance are liberally enlightened, although interesting to surmise the reasons why such a negation of self-worth would be thought valid.

The potential for enhanced aesthetic experience for a dancer/person may be sourced from the manner in which a dancer perceives herself/himself as a whole being,

consciously patterning space through time. Taking these ideas as starting points for dance performance offers different instigation for art making behaviours, emphasising unique personal experience and increasing the potential for creative explorations.

Discussion earlier in the paper reviewed the tradition of distancing the 'self' as a source of aesthetic experience and artistic appreciation, the 'favoured' understanding of experience being through the intellect and spirit. Dance education faces a continued prejudice because of its close and direct association with the body. Postmodern traditions in dance identify with human physicality, emotion and sensation of feeling, notions that are often frowned upon by the accepted traditions of academic schools of aesthetic and artistic thought. Western cultural fascination with time attends more lucidly to reviewing the past and planning the future than attending to the experience of the present. The reception of value in art often takes the same stance. If we add to this the inherent tensions shared between cultural notions of time, work and value, then some of the basic objections to improvisation and performance as valid academic forms can at least be appreciated. Culturally, the time it takes to create a work is valued often more as a symbol of labour than artistic vision. An inherent suspicion of spontaneity and sensation still pervades attitudes towards the experience of art.

### *Dance Appreciation*

In the work of Smith and Smith (1977), the idea of using a skills based approach to aesthetic education is promoted. They define 'skill' as a cultivated capacity for following a set of rules. Although the focus on so-called objectified sets of rules as fulfilling aesthetic criteria may be contentious, Adshead *et al.* (1982) devised a skills-based approach to dance analysis based on these earlier studies, arguing that an informed response is the ultimate aim of dance education. It could be argued that using methods of analysis as an aid to the appreciation of dance is destructive to the sense of 'wholeness' of a work. On the other hand, and this is the view adopted in this paper, analysis as part of an inquiry into a work is likely to enhance the potential for aesthetic experience of a whole work. Structured approaches to appreciation may provide an increased sensitivity to the quality of a work, without necessarily dividing or changing its nature. Greene (1981) argues that this understanding in dance can be called 'literacy', that is, achieving the capacity to discriminate and an ability to perceive a qualitative whole. It is often assumed that it is in the viewing of dances that aesthetic experience or appreciation takes place, an emphasis grounded in the importance placed on the role of the spectator, as early as Pythagoras. Consequently, emphasis is often placed on strategies that will support a way of 'seeing' works, or deconstructing works. However, it is important to remember that external viewings of works are only one way to access what could rightly be seen as a 'lived experience'; analysis happens in all aspects of dance experience.

Foster (1986, 1996) and Adshead (1988) promote structural and language-based methods of dance analysis which, it could be argued, reinforce the issues of 'translatability' and the categorical use of linguistic constructs referred to earlier in the paper. Interest in linguistic approaches to dance is based in structuralist and post-structuralist theories, wherein a certain kind of model of language was adopted and applied to a vast

area of media. Rothfield (1994) argues that the increase in the use of linguistic based theory that promotes the analysis of sources as texts presumes linguistic meaning which may not be the most appropriate manner of interpretation. Singular adherence to these approaches may influence detrimentally what it is that dance can communicate and on what level, having the potential effect of limiting the boundaries of experience. The early research in dance analysis by Adshear *et al.* (1982) suggested that a verbal language would be necessary for working in the medium of human movement. Whilst this may have resulted from attempts to establish dance as an academic discipline in educational institutions, they were later to question the value of this limitation (Adshear, 1988). Smith-Autard (1994, p. 32) points out the continual problem, commenting that, 'not only are there never adequate words but there is a tendency not to notice that for which we have no language', an interesting conundrum for future research in language, psychology and dance.

The ease of viewing dance on television hides the impression that it is a different experience to live performance, yet most of the teaching of analysis is dependent on television monitors, which reduce the viewing scale and restrict focus. The value of varied approaches to viewing experiences of dance should be considered; at the very least the size of projection could change the impact of a work. Computer technology and data projection begins to open a new realm of approaches to analysis 'online'. The interactive technology seen in the research of Forsythe (1999) and the educational research of Smith-Autard (1999) begins to change the environment of learning. The increasing access to the use of technology in classrooms and studios has been long awaited by dance educators. Explorations of space, dynamics, and anatomy are not new in dance, but 'new technologies' are catching up and providing tools that can be used to visualise aspects of what is predominantly an internal experience. A strong argument for the incorporation of interactive technologies into dance education could be the enhanced currency and credibility that it gives dance education. Dance educators can share their long developed expertise across an expanding field of computer generated images, using the capability of technology and assisting future developments.

The research work of Preston-Dunlop (1991), Sanchez-Colberg (1992) and Donaldson (1994) is important to consider because it advances the choreological theories initiated by Rudolf Laban as early as 1928, devising unique approaches to transmitting information in methods that are seen as intrinsic to dance. Donaldson (1994) emphasises the value of choreological approaches to dance knowledge, arguing that whilst meaning is dependent on the viewer, in agreement with deconstructionist views, it is influenced by the images that have been created in and through the structures of the medium. For Donaldson, choreological language and choreological analyses are part of daily dance practice in performance, composition class and the appreciation of dance. Choreological analysis, then, is the consideration of the meaning implications carried by the intricate structural, psychological and ideological elements of a work, enabling access to the dance as an aesthetically significant structural entity (Donaldson, 1994).

In the present discussion the suggestion is that by addressing these intricate modes of appreciation individuals may increase insight into many aspects of a work, opening many previously undisclosed areas of interest. The guiding principle of this understanding of aesthetic education is not to make judgements, but to access, collect and collate

information. Simpson (1985) supports this view, favouring individual interpretations without predetermined perceptions and judgements.

In a line of development from the 'Total Theatre' favoured by Laban to the choreological investigations proposed by Preston-Dunlop (1998) and the analytical explorations of Forsythe (1999), dance education has been challenged to expand the discipline beyond what could be seen as its earlier movement focus. Dance incorporates the dancer, the space, the time, the context of creation, as equal and fundamental elements of the medium. Dance educators have in the past argued to free dance education from the constraints of musical form and the regimentation of physical exercise. By acknowledging that dance can be explored as a multidimensional art form, the continued evolution and validity of dance education as a potential source of aesthetic encounters can be further examined.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The aim of this paper has been to promote discussion of the potential for coherence in dance education by a re-evaluation of the nature of aesthetic experiences in dance pedagogy. Understanding the concept of the aesthetic as the simultaneous engagement of body, mind and sensibility, aligning feeling and cognition is discussed throughout the paper as an important starting place. The 'wide awakesness' urged by Schutz (1967), and revealed in a level of consciousness, originality, and reflectiveness, is a succinct vision of the potential benefits of a curriculum in dance informed by aesthetic education.

Developing a dance education which engages in active explorations, incorporating the consciousness of improvisation and art making alongside historical and cultural reflection, criticism and analysis in a cohesive framework is the primary focus. The relevance of the aesthetic is that it has to do with discovering being 'human', individual and 'interested' rather than distanced, removed and 'objective' as earlier theorists promoted. Attention should focus on what is learnt in aesthetically significant dance education, and what is of value to be learnt in facilitating the empowerment of the individual. The challenges presented in texts, such as that of Shapiro (1998), should help navigate this process.

A narrowing of the view of how 'intelligence' is manifest, which is presently being promoted, should not restrict the development of dance within an academic framework. The justifications for using 'traditional' assessment procedures for instance may be strong in the struggle for discipline survival, but the challenges of formulating methods of assessment through praxis more suited to aspects of dance could help evolve a visionary and imaginative curriculum. Can we accommodate experimental and experiential theories into dance education, such as those discussed earlier concerning the potentialities of the fluidity of form in improvisation and somatic practise? Reviewing procedures so that assessment can be used as an ongoing 'conversation' may help formulate practices which have relevance, coherence and credibility. There are already processes of development in operation that can be capitalised upon, for example, student contracts of learning, negotiated study, peer and self-assessment, programmes of 'transferable skilling', focus group and independent learning tasks, reflective analysis, the use of interactive technology, and the use of internet assisted distance learning. At

a time when 'education' in its broad sense is becoming increasingly marginalised when the most favoured drive is towards a functional curriculum that develops 'basics', the benefits of aesthetic experiences need to be emphasised in the development of the whole person.

In Dissanayake's (1992) view, aesthetic acuity is in part an innate endowment. Dance education can provide the potential for the enhancement and development of this trait, through the expansion of perceptual powers and the cultivation of that sensibility that leads to the direct apprehension of the world in which we live. There are no ready-made proposals that outline the creation of such an 'articulate public' Dewey (1934). There is, however, a need to research and validate new ways of contemplating teaching and learning in and from dance. A role for educators in general and dance educators in particular is to embark upon a collaborative search which broadens the sense of self-reflective knowledge with reference to each individual's actualised experience of the world. These postpositivist ideals may influence daily practice, adjusting approaches to teaching by re-evaluating the balance between studio based experiential learning as well as the time given to feedback. Time is a vital element in this discussion and one which is increasingly negated, not only by the control of financial expenditure but also by our cultural condition.

An expansion of the scope of qualitative research methodologies by dance educators is beginning to emerge, encompassing, for example, studio based research, case study review, action research, and content analysis, evidenced internationally through the work of Dance and the Child International. Increasing the debate surrounding the approaches adopted by these and other research studies is an important next step. This is especially true in light of comments by Bassett (1999) that even the thought that dance might be the object of research is not universally acknowledged. Incorporating the research experiences from colleagues in other disciplines evolving qualitative research methodologies beyond the arts into humanities and science would support the academic stability of dance and provide a fertile environment for growth.

Ultimately, importance should be given to how individuals interpret the range of their experiences, as this will influence their ability to positively exploit the opportunities created by and offered to them. The research study at the basis of this article attempts to explore the phenomenon of aesthetically significant dance experience by adopting a sense of 'wide awakesness' in a broad ranging reflective process that seeks to evolve understanding. The value of attending to aesthetic considerations in the teaching of dance education is the potential breadth of engagement across an extended range of knowledges that will ultimately help evolve the sensitive cognition prized by Baumgarten in first identifying the concept of the aesthetic.

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