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Somatic Value System for Life and its Integration into Dance Practices

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By

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Abstract

As somatic practices become increasingly included in dance degree programs in higher education, it is important to understand how they influence teaching, dancing and choreographing. This thesis is an investigation in how dance practices are influenced by the integration of values defined through somatic practices. After defining somatics for the purpose of this work, the author's personal somatic values are defined as the existence of truths in the body, a sensory component, and ease of movement. This work will demonstrate how somatic values can impact dance practices including teaching, performing and choreographing. Scientific knowledge and imagery are presented as supports for developing somatic integration.

In addition to exploring the role of scientific knowledge and imagery in relation to somatic experiences, this work looks at dance professionals and scholars who have integrated their somatic ideals into dance practices. These professionals include Erick Hawkins, Eva Karczag and Jane Hawley. The work concludes with a written reflection by the author based on personal applications of somatic values into the creative choreographic process.

Introduction

In 1970, philosopher and Feldenkrais practitioner Thomas Hanna coined the term 'somatics' from the "Greek word 'soma,' meaning 'the body in its wholeness.'"[1] Today, a somatic practice can be understood as a codified routine or exercise created to increase ease of movement, enhance body awareness encouraged by body-mind interconnectivity, and to improve daily movement abilities. A set or series of somatic practices assembled into a codified system in order to increase ease and efficiency of movement and improving daily movement abilities is considered a somatic technique (examples include Alexander Technique, Body-Mind Centering, Feldenkrais Technique, Ideokinesis, and others). Often somatic practices integrate personal reflection into the process, enhancing kinesthetic awareness alongside an understanding of what is actually happening in the body – and how. These practices can take place through a series of practitioner-led sessions, individual practices, or group sessions.

For two years, I had the honor and privilege of dancing with Elizabeth Clark Dance Ensemble. Elizabeth Clark,[2] a former principal dancer in the Juilliard Dance Ensemble, does not advertise her use of somatic practices in her classes, but it is clear they are prevalent in all she does. As a soloist in her

[1] International Association for Dance Medicine & Science (IADMS), *Somatic Studies and Dance,* September 17, 2009, 1.

[2] Elizabeth Clark attended Juilliard where José Limón significantly influenced her dancing. Juilliard was also where her somatic journey began with Lulu Sweigard (Ideokinesis). Clark continues to study somatic practices across the country. Her current dance practices include teaching classes focused on self-awareness and artistic excellence. She also performs with her company, Elizabeth Clark Dance Ensemble, in Rochester, NY and is active in bringing arts to children. www.elizabethclarkdance.weebly.com.

company I was able to learn more than movement. On a daily basis, I was amazed at the movement this woman would perform despite physically limitations (having undergone a hip replacement and a experiencing flipped vertebra). What is her secret? Well, it is not really a secret at all – she shares her expertise with her students and dancers each day. Her ongoing somatic practice infiltrates every aspect of her being.

During rehearsals she shared her 65-plus years of life experience, and almost as many years of dancing. Each session included moments of somatic practices, often Ideokinesis, in addition to technique or repertory. These moments encouraged appropriate alignment, ease of tension and injury prevention. Clark focused mostly on skeletal and muscular anatomy through imagery and visualization. Even as we explored choreographic ideas there was an emphasis on the need to sensitively explore the body-mind connection, searching for the most easeful movement pathway as Clark shared the meaning and the mechanics of the movement material. This learning process invited longevity and wellness for all of the dancers.

Mostly, it was the collaborative and caring atmosphere Clark fostered that promoted sensitivity in the movement and towards others. Had Clark not shared personal anecdotes, I would never have known that the inclusion of these practices came from years of experience and a growing understanding of bodies – especially her own. Although I was unaware at the time, it was my experience with her that would encourage me to embrace these same somatic values as I embark on my own research endeavors. Upon

reflection, I realize I studied with many somatic beings during my undergraduate career at William Smith College, including Michelle Iklé[3] and Cadence Whittier.[4] My studies at The College at Brockport with instructors such as William (Bill) Evans[5] and Mariah Maloney[6] provide the other somatic bookend to this segment of my journey.

The through-line of somatic fundamentals has been deeply enriching and has certainly been a theme of utmost importance within my adult dance training and education. While studying with somatics-based instructors, I continuously discover large amounts of dance growth including accessing larger ranges of motion – the ability to get both really tiny and take up lots of space – finally feeling grounded and connected to the Earth, and finding an ease in order to move at faster speeds than I could previously. It has become clear there is something special about the intersection of dance and somatics

[3] Michelle Iklé is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Dance at Hobart and William Smith Colleges (HWS) in Geneva, NY. At HWS, Iklé teaches a course in somatics, as well as Jazz and Modern techniques – both of which have a strong somatic influence. Iklé has also presented several works within the department and in the Greater Rochester area. http://www.hws.edu/academics/dance/facultyProfile.aspx?facultyID=172 (Accessed April 30, 2015).

[4] Cadence Whittier is a classical ballet dancer and a Certified Laban Movement Analyst. Currently, Whittier is Associate Professor of Dance at Hobart and William Smith Colleges (HWS) in Geneva, NY, and is on faculty for the Integrated Movement Studies Certification Program. http://www.hws.edu/academics/dance/facultyProfile.aspx?facultyID=337 (Accessed April 30, 2015).

[5] William (Bill) Evans is currently the visiting modern dance guest artist at Dean College (dean.edu). Evans is also Visiting Professor Emeritus at The State University of New York College at Brockport, Dancer, Choreographer, Laban Movement Analyst and founder of Bill Evans Method of Teaching Dance Technique, billevansdance.org, http://www.brockport.edu/dance/people/bevans.html (Accessed April 29, 2015).

[6] Mariah Maloney is currently Assistant Professor at The State University of New York College at Brockport where she teaches repertory, composition, improvisation, somatics, and somatics-based modern dance technique. Maloney is also artistic director of Mariah Maloney Dance and a former Trisha Brown Dance Company Member. https://www.brockport.edu/dance/people/mmaloney.html, mariahmaloneydance.com, (Accessed April 29, 2015).

for me. When they come together in my life, I am able to achieve dance and personal goals. The nonjudgmental observation present in somatics has given me access to self-esteem, allowing me to believe in myself as I push my limits. I continue to encounter others who feel somatics has changed their dances; once somatics impacts our dance lives, it forever remains in the building of our individual principles.

This leg of my journey brings me to the following guiding question: How can an individual set of somatic principles inform personal practice in the form of teaching, creating or performing? It is my belief that while sometimes the incorporation of somatics into dance practices is a conscious choice, there are times that the process occurs naturally based on a value system of life that becomes integrated into all aspects of an individual's being. For me, this value system includes openness, sensing, intuiting and listening to one's body. While at times this may mean bringing in codified practices from somatic techniques (Alexander Technique, Body-Mind Centering, Bartenieff Fundamentals, Ideokinesis, and others), I believe this value system encourages personal reflection, enhancing kinesthetic awareness based on internal sensing. The existence of this value system allows individual choice and difference alongside nonjudgmental observation. How does this value system inform different creative practices including rehearsing, teaching, performing or choreographing?

In the following chapters I present my investigations and begin to answer the following questions: Why must somatics be "fit in" when the

result of performing them enhances living and moving? Where else can dancers utilize these values and skills? How does scientific information inform somatic experience? Can we merge somatic knowledge with other knowledge developed through dance and choreography?

In Chapter One, I define 'somatics' as I will be using it in this written thesis and outline my somatic values. As I have found both scientific theories and imagery are influential in the application of somatic values and practices in dance. I have articulated these as my somatic pillars, as they support and encourage processes within somatic use. To investigate somatics in teaching, I look at a collegiate program currently in practice at Luther College in Iowa. Other applications of somatics are explored, especially choreographically through the work of somatic choreographers including Christina Houghton and Eva Karczag.

In Chapter Two I discuss the role of scientific knowledge as a somatic pillar. Since somatic practices are centered on the body, knowledge of its anatomy increases students' abilities to truly invest in a somatic experience. In order to provide tools for the varying knowledge bases in the room, it is helpful to have a breadth of explanations and language on hand; sometimes the vocabulary will come from the sciences. I begin to question how, and to what extent, dance science and its language can enhance the use of somatic practices in the dance studio.

In Chapter Three I consider the term 'imagery' and its role as a somatic pillar in somatic endeavors in the studio. Based on various studio

observations and experiences, I present different types of imagery and categorizations. I begin to determine what deems imagery effective. I also express the different uses of imagery, and how images can be used to evoke specific sensations while instructing dance technique practices.

These explorations in teaching practices certainly influence, and are influenced by, the choreographic branch of dance practice. My personal choreographic discoveries rely on my teaching and performance practices as they relate to the integration of somatic practices. Together, they inform my creative practices through experience and exploration. This academic year, I worked with five female dancers to develop a choreographic work presented in DANCE/Strasser March 5-7, 2015. Throughout the creation process, I looked to create an environment in rehearsals based on my personal set somatic values – to include consideration of the dancers' opinions - both in movement and in defining our somatic values for rehearsals. In a lot of ways this was not a conscious decision, but rather something I recognized during the process. I formulated many of my choreographic prompts as questions, rather than demands; I encouraged self-discovery over giving directions; and I asked my dancers to be true to themselves as performers as I wanted to present them as real people on stage, rather than characters. I reflect on this process in the final chapter. This thesis works to encapsulate my investigations of somatic practices and detailed influences across dance practices.

Chapter One
Defining Somatics & Somatic Values in Dance Practices

A somatic practice can be understood as a codified routine or exercise developed to increase ease and efficiency of movement, enhance body awareness encouraged by body-mind interconnectivity, improve daily movement abilities, and decrease risk of injury. A set or series of somatic practices is considered a somatic technique (examples include Alexander Technique, Body-Mind Centering, Feldenkrais Technique, Ideokinesis). Often somatic practices integrate personal reflection into the process, enhancing kinesthetic awareness alongside an understanding of what is actually happening in the body – and how. These practices typically take place through a series of practitioner-led sessions, individual practices, or group sessions.

The first generation of somatic pioneers has been defined "based on common lore, oral tradition, and written treatises" as individuals including Frederick Matthias Alexander, Mabel Todd, Irmgard Bartenieff, and others who began their work as early as the 1930's.[7] Since then, somatic practices have continued to become increasingly popular, even more so after termed *somatics* in 1970. The variety of codified techniques leads to differing understandings and definitions of *somatics.* Several instructors may teach somatic-based dance techniques, yet lead classes with contrasting movement demands. The ubiquity of the term *somatics* leads to confusion and

[7] Martha Eddy, A brief history of somatic practices and dance: historical development of the field of somatic education and its relationship to dance, *Journal of Somatic Practices and Dance* Vol. 1, no. 1 (2009), 12.

misunderstandings during discussions amongst dancers practicing somatics. Conversation about somatics can sound "vague or cultish" since it is "based in the body and is about each individual's unique experience."[8] Putting words to personal experience can be a challenging process and result in opposing experiences for multiple individuals. Despite the lack of specificity, common elements are present across the many techniques, drawing them together under the classification of *somatic practices.* Through my ever-changing relationship with somatics over the years I have clarified my definition of somatics. Here, I will consider other definitions I have encountered, share the somatic values I am continuously exploring, and present various applications of these values in practice by somatic practitioners in the dance world.

Defining 'somatics'

As discussed, not everyone uses the term *somatics* the same way. "Somatics is an umbrella term used to assemble experiential bodily practices that privilege subjective experience. As both a way of perceiving one's body and a specific field of knowledge," somatics has a confusing history, but its role in refining human movement has remained similar.[9] Formerly termed "body therapies, bodywork, body-mind integration, body-mind disciplines, movement awareness, and movement (re) education,"[10] the term *somatics* is credited to philosopher and somatic practitioner Thomas Hanna, drawing

[8] Julie A. Brodie and Elin E. Lobel, *Dance and Somatics,* McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2012, 3.
[9] Sylvie Fortin (2002): Living in Movement: Development of Somatic Practices in Different Cultures, Journal of Dance Education, 2:4, p128.
[10] IADMS, *Somatic Studies and Dance,* 1.

from the Greek word "soma" (body).[11] Hanna explains that the soma is "the body as perceived from within by first person perception," pointing to a mode of observation relying on internal sensing and observation to unpack the inner-body communication system.[12]

An understanding of where the field began its naming, though brief, helps me in understanding the relationships across techniques. Although each specific technique in its purest form incorporates different methods, somatic practice aims to encourage full-bodied wellness. According to International Somatic Movement Education & Therapy Association (ISMETA) somatic movement education includes the following: postural and movement evaluation, experiential anatomy and imagery, movement patterning and re-patterning, and communication and guidance through touch and verbal cues.[13] When individuals involved in dance practices are certified or experienced in a specific somatic technique, these four modalities are absolutely used. However, since dance requires increased range of motion and expression than pedestrian movement, sometimes the somatic intentions take on new roles.

Founder and director of Center for Kinesthetic Education,[14] Martha Eddy, shares how dance fueled the growth and development of somatics,

[11] IADMS, *Somatic Studies and Dance*, 2.
[12] Fortin, 128.
[13] International Somatic Movement Education & Therapy Association (ISMETA), http://www.ismeta.org/about-ismeta/scope-of-practice/, (Accessed April 13, 2015).
[14] Dr. Eddy's Resume, Center for Kinesthetic Education, Martha Eddy, http://wellnesscke.net/staff.htm, (Accessed April 2013).

causing a tight interweaving of dance and somatics over time.[15] This does not mean that the methods of intertwining are consistent across the board – it can differ depending on the training of individuals in both somatics and dance. However, in the case when somatics is being inserted, rather than the main objective, there are particular values consistently present that impact the environment and process.

Interwoven dance and somatics

Due to the interwoven histories[16] of dance and somatic practices, dancers have largely contributed to the field of somatics and continue to deepen their level of somatic expertise through experiencing and teaching somatic practices.[17] Although increasingly popular since the 1970s, in 1980, "the dance world began to take serious interest in somatic education with the Dance Magazine series" authored by Martha Myers regarding 'the Body Therapies' – what we now term somatic practices.[18] Myers has played an integral role in the dance world, founding the dance department at Connecticut College in 1971, and serving as Dean of American Dance Festival 1969-2000 where she "pioneered the study of dance medicine and somatics."[19] In this six-part series February 1980 through March 1980,[20] Myers explores her experimentation with Ideokinesis, Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method,

[15] Eddy, 6.
[16] Eddy, 16.
[17] Eddy, 20-21.
[18] IADMS, *Somatic Studies and Dance,* 1.
[19] Martha Myers, ADF Blog, http://www.americandancefestival.org/2013/06/martha-myers/ (Accessed May 11, 2015). Myers currently lives in New York and continues to inspire the dance community.
[20] Martha Myers, Dance magazine. pt. 1, Feb 1980, p 90-92; continued in subsequent issues through July 1980.

and Bartenieff Fundamentals based on her dialogue and work with dancers, scientists, and somatic practitioners.[21] As mentioned before, dancers often experience various somatic techniques as recuperation, or a break, from typical dance routines as they are taught practices to heal or to enhance body awareness, and thereby improve their dance technique and performance abilities. I believe if we allow these somatic values to further infiltrate our dance practices we will find a similar overall wellness in a full-bodied approach to dancing.

Martha Eddy writes, "When influenced by somatic inquiry, choreography and dance should well become of increasing interest to academic inquiry."[22] By integrating somatic studies we move dance studies to the forefront, as students learn how the body works and how to hone dancing skills simultaneously. Until recently, however, "in many university and studio settings information on somatics was often discussed theoretically, combined with other curricular components, or relegated to extra-curricular study."[23]

To be clear, I am not suggesting that somatic practices become permanently intertwined with dance practices, but rather, that by studying somatic practices, these somatic values become engrained in teaching, choreographing and dancing – and that those dance practices are thereby enhanced. Students are currently given time for somatic inquiry, to improve

[21] IADMS, *Somatic Studies and Dance*, 1.
[22] Eddy, 23.
[23] Geber and Wilson, 50.

dance technique and hone choreographic abilities, but these courses are rarely addressed as supporting one another. Instead, students migrate from class to class experiencing each as something new, often separated from the last. Perhaps it is the responsibility of academia to provide the space for modes of exploration, assigning time or writing when students can bring these pieces of knowledge together. In this way, dance students can weave together their ideas of various origins, synthesizing and experiencing the process of applying kinesthetic understanding into phrase work, and eventually into choreography and performing, allowing the previously separated containers to flow into one another.

Developing personal somatic values

I have defined my own somatic values to support the internal sensation of somatics and the expression of dance simultaneously. My somatic values are present during the intersection of somatic and dance practices. These values are supported by scientific knowledge and accessed through imagery in language, and therefore I have termed scientific knowledge and imagery my "somatic pillars." These pillars build the foundation for deepening individual sensorial experiences.

Upon clarifying my deep-rooted somatic values, I find they align at the core with what Julie Brodie and Erin E. Lobel refer to as "Somatic Principles" in their book *Somatics and Dance.*[24] My somatic values are the following:

1) Presence of "truths" about the body

[24] Brodie and Lobel, 6.

2) A sensorial component

3) The progression towards movement efficiency.

What does each value entail? Unraveling each individually unveils the complexities involved.

First, the idea of "truths" about the body is a bit dichotomous, especially in relation to somatic theories. I hesitate to use the word "truth" in that it implies the existence of only one correctness, when in reality somatic studies demonstrate the importance of embracing individual experiences. The very word *somatic* is termed such by Hanna in reference to the Greek the body's ability to perceive and observe internally.[25] At the same time groups of people across the globe pass down general ideas about the body. Although expressed and defined differently across communities, each group has perceptions about body remain "truths" for them. Therefore, I argue these "truths" do exist, and somatic methods are based on scientific research (which will be discussed further in chapter 2), historical concepts, or intuition and exploration that developed into what Western medicine now considers fact.

My second somatic value is the presence of a sensorial component. Sensing, or paying attention to the communication happening within the body due to neural signals, is more directly drawn from the somatic term and its derivation. Digging a bit deeper, somatic practices encourage sensing to develop an internal awareness. This component relies on openness, intuiting

[25] Fortin, 128.

and addressing signals within one's body. Sensing encourages the idea of process favored over product. It is beneficial because "shifting from product (skill acquisition) to process (what is actually happening in the body) can promote optimal functioning."[26] I find the activity of sensing involves non-judgmental observation and personal reflection, resulting in enhanced kinesiological understanding alongside amplified kinesthetic awareness.

It is important to note, especially as we begin to discuss my third somatic value, there is no end-goal in somatic practice as there is always room for change. Nonetheless, as most involve retraining neuromuscular pathways in favor of most efficient muscular activation, ease and efficiency of movement is desired in somatic practices. Often this is found through locating individual balance. In its most basic form this means finding the "balance of doing and not doing"[27] via internal sensing and the developed awareness. Balance aids in accessing sensation, while sensation brings awareness to what is contracting and decontracting,[28] allowing dancers to truly find sensation in motion. I find each of these somatic values present as I explore somatic practices as a dancer, choreographer and instructor. These three somatic values come together, acknowledging the importance of self and individuality, to enhance body awareness, ease tension and prevent injury. In application to dance practices my values create a "somatic

[26] Brodie and Lobel, 7.
[27] Renata Celichowska, *The Erick Hawkins Modern Dance Technique,* Hightstown, NJ: Princeton Book Company, Publishers, 2000, 3.
[28] Celichowska, term coined from Erick Hawkins meaning releasing of tension found during contraction.

approach to understanding the body,"[29] allowing for change and personal growth.

Applications in the class-studio

Somatic practices can be integrated into studio practices through several methods. These include moments during a warm-up and improvisational prompts throughout the class. Integration can limit muscular overload and prevent injury, and it impacts the overall environment. In the classroom, application of somatic values allows for body sensing in motion, allowing for ease and efficiency of movement, prevention of injury, and development of individual artistry.

Some dance instructors have been integrating somatic practices into their studio warm-ups: Elizabeth Clark, Artistic Director of Elizabeth Clark Dance Ensemble, utilizes Ideokinesis (the use of imagery to change movement patterns) at the beginning of class;[30] Mariah Maloney, Assistant Professor of Dance at The College at Brockport, begins her modern technique class by tuning-in via sensing explorations, encouraging students to tap into body awareness before executing large, virtuosic movement. Andrea Olsen, Middlebury College;[31] Barbara Mahler, Klein Technique practitioner and choreographer;[32] and Karl Anderson, Skinner Release at Movement Research

[29] Pamela Geber and Margaret Wilson, "Teaching at the interface of dance science and somatics," *Journal of Dance Medicine & Science,* 14:2 (April 2010), 52.
[30] Elizabeth Clark, Interviewed by Bethany (Fagan) Good, Personal phone interview, Brockport, NY/Rochester, NY, April 18, 2013.
[31] Andrea Olsen, andrea-olsen.com, (Accessed April 26, 2015).
[32] Barbara Mahler, barbaramahler.net, (Accessed April 20, 2015).

(Melt)[33] are few among many dancers and choreographers applying their somatic expertise in their dance teaching practices. Integrating somatic theories, practices and values into our dance technique courses encourages proper skeletal alignment, thus promoting muscular efficiency and lessening the likelihood of injury. Dance training supported by somatic values of kinesiological truths and inner-body sensing leads to more efficient movement, creating a healthier dancing body.[34]

Beginning class with "breathing, sensing, connecting and initiating" through improvisational scores "can help the dancer reenter the body and retrain the kinesthetic sense," bringing students fully into the studio experience.[35] Giving time to focus inward helps set students up for a "richer, more rewarding class experience."[36] In doing so, teachers allow for "quieting the mind-body 'chatter' in order to focus attention on the body's sensory stimuli."[37] This process of providing verbal prompts with options for student response sets up the teacher as more of a guide for the movement experience rather than an expert, leading to student empowerment[38] – it certainly causes an environmental shift in the studio and allows for teaching of skills beyond bodily articulation of dance vocabulary.

[33] Movement Research (Melt) class descriptions, http://movementresearch.org/classesworkshops/classdescriptions/#cw1126, (Accessed April 24, 2015).
[34] Celichowska, 10.
[35] Brodie and Lobel, 17-18.
[36] Brodie and Lobel, 79.
[37] IADMS, *Somatic Studies and Dance*, 2.
[38] Geber and Wilson, 59.

Somatic practices can be used beyond the moment inviting students into simply being in the dance studio. Jane Hawley has modeled a somatic transformation of the dance program at Luther College. Starting in 2000 when she took over the program as Professor of Dance, Hawley has fueled each course with the mind-body connection sought in somatic practices.[39] In Hawley's program "classes emphasize proprioception and imagery rather than traditional dance steps. Students play, investigate, and experiment from verbal instructions."[40] I want to be clear, that I do not think we must eliminate codified dance steps for effectiveness with somatic values. There can be a balance between "exploratory activities…led verbally"[41] and more traditional dance class exercises or virtuosic movement. Somatic values can exist within more codified vocabulary by favoring internal sensation over matching an external shape, encouraging self-discovery and shifting "focus from mastery of material/technique to what is actually happening in the body."[42]

I believe by taking the time for sensing and reflecting within class, students understand the relationships within their bodies in movement. Upon deepening their understandings, they can make adjustments to investigate the most muscularly efficient movement pathway within the desired aesthetic. This allows for "training that is in harmony with its own

[39] Nancy Wozny, Radically Somatic, *Dance Magazine,* 15.
[40] Wozny, 15.
[41] Brodie and Lobel, 18.
[42] Brodie and Lobel, 81.

body and with the environment around it" in order "to discover and promote movement efficiency."[43]

In finding greater movement efficiency, dancers are limiting muscular overload. "The somatic learning context is designed to help refinement of muscular effort"[44] in order to find balance in the body. Students at Luther College must be finding this balance, as "Hawley is most proud of her injury-free record for the past nine years"[45] (as of 2009). Her approach to the dance program encourages mindfulness and awareness, which she purports helps to diminish injury. While it is not stated outright, I imagine decisions decreasing the number of injury include not only muscularly efficient movement, but also resting and recuperating from movement when necessary. A focus on making choices based on bodily needs diminishes injury risk. The environment promoted through somatic practices, and the attention to individual need, gives opportunities to rest when necessary.

Hawley's courses speak to more than just movement mechanics. She discusses her courses as a "community of movers exploring a particular idea, each finding a unique way into the material," embracing individuality in movement and thought.[46] Allowing individual movement choices speaks to development of artistry; individuals have the opportunity to dig deeper into who they are as movers. This blend of exploration, improvisation and sensation within codification gives opportunity for individual student choice.

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[43] Celichowska, 15.
[44] IADMS, *Somatic Studies and Dance*, 2.
[45] Wozny, 16.
[46] Wozny, 14.

Somatic practices, in their very nature, encourage the individual experience and difference. Newfound understanding of individuality comes together with movement efficiency to present skilled movers in and out of the dance studio.

Choreographic applications

Somatic values manifest in the choreographic process quite differently than in technique study, but may yield similar results.

> Somatics has also had a strong influence on choreographic styles in the last twenty years, and will continue to influence dance aesthetics as discreet practices merge and cross-fertilize. "Release technique," a highly popular approach in the downtown New York City dance scene of the 1990's, is one example of a somatic offshoot.[47]

Choreographers are already applying somatic practices in developing new work, lessening the gap between somatic practices and choreography while widening the application of somatic practices beyond their dominant usage of increasing full-bodied wellness. These choreographers have placed somatic techniques – or values – alongside manipulation of movement phrases, time, and space within their choreographic toolboxes. Upon clarifying "somatic choreography" as a classification of processes rather than types of dances and products, aligning with my somatic values, it became apparent that somatic practices are involved in creation and development both intrinsically and

[47] Geber and Wilson 58.

through specific applications. Relying on a non-judgmental perspective while observing movement in the exploration phase of choreography is just one method choreographers are using to apply somatic values within the creating process.[48]

Some somatic choreographers are certified in a codified technique, such as Alexander Technique (Jacquie Davis),[49] Body-Mind Centering (Roseanne Spradlin),[50] and Feldenkrais Technique (Donna Blank)[51] among others. Within this group of certified practitioners, a handful are utilizing their somatic expertise in choreography simply by claiming an inability to extract somatic training from their teaching, dancing or choreography.[52]

Former dancer in the Trisha Brown Dance Company Eva Karczag has developed her own teaching and choreography over the years through somatic influence in a way more based on her journey. Eva Karczag's background includes Alexander Technique, which she describes as "a body-mind re-education tool,"[53] and T'ai Chi – a movement experience that

[48] Steinwald, Michele, blogs.walkerart.org/performingarts/2012/10/24/sourcing-dance-through-the-body-bodycartography-projects-creative-process, (Accessed April 2013).
[49] Alexander Technique teacher, Certified Laban Movement Analyst (CMA), New York state certified K-12 dance teacher, and Professor Emerita in the Department of Dance at The College at Brockport, https://www.brockport.edu/dance/people/jdavis.html.
[50] New York City-based artist exploring body consciousness in choreography. Body-Mind Centering informs her teaching and workshops, http://www.roseannespradlin.com/teaching/.
[51] The Feldenkrais Method and Dance, http://www.feldenkrais.com/article_content.asp?edition=1&section=20&article=71, (Accessed April 2015).
[52] Eva Karczag, "Creating a Body: Promoting Independent Creative Thought," Corpus. September 2005. http://www.corpusweb.net/promoting-independent-creative-thought-4.html.
[53] Karczag.

Karczag says "allowed me to move organically, in ways that felt right."[54] Her past somatic experiences influencing more than just her dancing, Karczag writes the following: "When I teach, I begin with the body – all exploration is rooted in its material miracle." "My teaching methods reflect my history," she claims.[55] We could say this is true for everyone; the history of each person is presented in actions of each day following – in some form or another.

Karczag describes her enjoyment in watching dancers who are able to "soften their surface," as they draw her "into their depth of physicality, emotion, of thought." She continues: "I want to watch. I am intrigued and made curious."[56] These descriptions demonstrate a benefit of integrating somatic ideals into practice by individual dancers. Watching her improvised dance solo in the Michelle Mahrer Films video *Horizon,* Karczag's somatic sensing is presented through her internal focus and the time she spends breaking down individual movements for analysis.[57]

After reading Alexander Technique practitioner Aileen Crow's description of Eva Karczag's performance as "fresh, fluid, boneless, exquisite," I expected to be drawn into the dancing, perhaps care more about the movement than the content of the piece.[58] Even with the presence of a wide variety of aesthetics and characteristics, I still thought each moment would induce similar feelings or reactions. While watching it became very

[54] Karczag.
[55] Karczag.
[56] Aileen Crow and Paul Sager, These Dances Rise Up: An Interview with Eva Karczag, *A Moving Journal,* Summer 2006, 4.
[57] Michelle Mahrer, "Horizon" featuring Eva Karczag, Michelle Mahrer films, 1996, http://michellemahrerfilms.com/tag/eva-karczag.
[58] Crow and Sager, 7.

clear that choreographers cannot be defined as "somatic choreographers" simply by viewing a sampling of work, as the movement is not overtly somatics-based. Somatic choreography does not mean that somatic practices have been put on stage. Instead, it means somatic practices informed the embodiment of the performance of movement.

Another example, choreographer Sara Shelton Mann, Alwin Nikolais and Murray Lewis protégé based in San Francisco, started the Company Contraband in 1979 as a "performance group and research ground combining the principles of contact, systems of the body and spiritual practice."[59] In her artistic statement, Mann describes the interconnectivity of her somatic healing and her art - together they enhance the ability for "energetic bodies [to] convey deeper-rooted messages than any culture or identity can express."[60] She continues; "My art is of a piece with my healing work and political engagement: it is meant to reveal and transmit the store of our collective humanity."[61] Mann finds growing strength in her work by combining her areas of expertise to push towards the same agenda, a power that may not be achieved without somatic values infiltrating her choreography and political engagement.

[59] Mann has also received the John Simon Guggenheim Award, 6 Isadora Duncan Awards, among others. In addition to her many performance endeavors, including artist in residence projects, Mann works in Energetic Clearing as a healing practice of the energetic systems of the body. Sara Shelton Mann, About, http://www.sarasheltonmann.org/about.
[60] Mann.
[61] Mann.

On the other hand, New Zealand performing dance artist Christina Houghton,[62] approaches choreography with specific somatic theories and values at hand. She is not using specific somatic techniques and practices, but instead approaches choreography with somatic concepts in mind. So often, as dancers and choreographers, we focus on the performance as the end game, a final event for which we hope to achieve our greatest work. Houghton suggests that instead, the performance is merely documentation of the on-going choreographic process. She removes the daily pressures of our product-obsessed society and instead focuses on a process-based experience.[63] Somatic practices focus on the now: what you sense in the moment, how a movement feels, how the action is being performed, and all dependent on the subjective experience. By emphasizing the present experience, the end result becomes less important, and the concept of a final product diminishes. Each performance – of a somatically embodied choreographic work – documents the changes in movement and decisions made since the last performance, highlighting any choreographic research or exploration.

Houghton spent quite a bit of time, about two years of blog-space,[64] grappling with the experience of somatic choreography. Challenging the

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[62] Christina Houghton has performed throughout New Zealand and previously spent four years performing in London. Although she invested in somatic inquiry while creating her solo work *I am Still here* (2011), current research is based around ecological thinking. Millicentdiaries.tumbler.com/bio.

[63] Christina Houghton, "What is somatic choreography," Millicent Diaries: Somatic Choreography Blog, March 14, 2011, millicentdiaries.tumblr.com/somaticchoreography.

[64] In her blog *Millicent Diaries,* Christina Houghton has created "fragmented persona" (Millicent) to express her thoughts and reactions. It is in these blog posts that Houghton shares her experiences with somatic choreography and what she terms "performance writing." Throughout her entries she shares her definitions of somatic choreography, her

definition of choreography as "a set known movement, often connected with various styles or dance technique," she describes how "somatic choreography finds a new way of writing of the body" and "challenges traditional forms of dance."[65] By bringing attention to the surroundings and how individuals react to different images, somatic choreography presents unexplored options; it gives new perspectives (and awareness) of stillness, attentiveness and exploration.[66] Dancers perform with a deeper, more developed, honest presence. Creating movement through deep sensations allows dancers to live inside those experiences each time the movement is executed. The performer can approach movement or "writing of the body" from the inside out each time, rather than impose an image associated with individual dance techniques.[67]

Several other choreographers are explicit in their use of somatics when discussing their choreographic endeavors. This includes Somatic Movers – a Philadelphia-based modern dance company directed by Kelly Adorno "that not only explores what is moving, but also why it's moving and how it's moving," – defining the purpose of their company as investigation of key aspects of kinesthetic awareness cultivated through somatic practices.[68] Adorno encourages dancers to reconnect with "natural movement" of the

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questioning of how somatic choreography can exist, and her encounters with performing from a somatic perspective. http://millicentdiaries.tumblr.com/somaticchoreography.
[65] Houghton.
[66] Houghton.
[67] Houghton.
[68] SomaticMovers, "Home," SomaticMovers, http://somaticmovers.com/ (Accessed April 20, 2013).

body to present "honest" dance works.[69] Emily Faulkner Dance is another group focusing on choreography driven by "innate body/mind intelligence."[70] Based in New York City, Emily Faulkner[71] is a choreographer, dancer, and improviser certified in Alexander Technique who "employs the principles of this method to…create a more open conduit for body/mind creativity."[72]

It is evident there is a multitude of individuals in the dance world experimenting with varying application of somatic knowledge to choreographic development. Some choreographers are adding somatic practices to their creative process, while others are allowing their somatic expertise to be solely inspiration or motivation. Martha Eddy writes, "Dance excites people to explore movement expression, deepen creative skills, and investigate the body kinesthetically."[73] If somatic practices enhance our body awareness, then they only further encourage these explorations supported by dance. By weaving choreography and somatics together, we not only bring the much-needed recuperation into the creative process, but we heighten the available compositional growth for choreographic works.

Whichever term you feel most appropriate to your individual practice, these "mind-body techniques loosely called 'somatic studies,' or simply,

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[69] SomaticMovers.
[70] Emily Faulkner Dance, "About," Emily Faulkner Dance, http://eafaulkner.wix.com/windupdance-2#!about (Accessed 20, 2013).
[71] Emily Faulkner has presented work at venues including Movement Research at the Judson Church, New Dance Alliance, and DanceNOW NYC. She teaches both dance and Alexander Technique and is on Faculty of Movement Research.
[72] Emily Faulkner Dance.
[73] Eddy, p 16.

'somatics,'"[74] become intimately intertwined with dance as we allow our studies to influence one another. In doing so, we apply somatic values of bodily truths, sensing, and movement efficiency, and we address the body as a whole. After all, "somatics, by definition, considers the whole being: body [and] mind…in its environment."[75] The somatic values allow for sensing safe choices during movement, preventing injury and inspiring greater expressivity.

[74] IADMS, *Somatic Studies and Dance*, 1.
[75] Brodie and Lobel, 124

Chapter Two
"Truths" About the Body - Roles of Scientific Knowledge

While integration of scientific movement theories into dance is an important concept in its own right, I am interested in how the use and application of scientific knowledge enhances and supports somatic values. I will examine this intersection in personal dance practices of teaching, performing and choreographing. Specifically, I am interested in knowledge regarding the following systems and their resulting interplay: skeletal, muscular, nervous and kinesthetic. Whether looking purely at the science of movement in dance or allowing it to inform somatic understandings, we must remember, "dance is not a scientific field even if it does employ various sciences to many good purposes."[76]

As previously defined, one of my overarching somatic values is the existence of common theories regarding the body, either from an intuitive or scientific place. This is because "concepts like breath, connectivity, sensing self and the environment, and initiation – they are innate components of the living organism."[77] These concepts comprise the "'Truths' about the way the body works and moves," which exist in most somatic practices and influence dancing bodies.[78] Individuals practicing or integrating somatic ideas benefit from understanding the scientific foundation. While certainly other sources (classes, research, scholarly publications) contribute to our knowledge bases,

[76] Sondra Fraleigh, Consciousness Matters, *Dance Research Journal,* Vol. 32, No. 1 (Summer 2000) 55.
[77] Brodie and Lobel, 6.
[78] Brodie and Lobel, 6.

incorporating more scientific information alongside somatic practices at varying degrees of specificity can encourage the movement experience to be deeply enriching. Details and depth of the science will vary based on several factors which I will discuss this further later.

While the knowing of scientific ideas is important independently, several principles – especially those involving the skeletal, muscular, nervous and kinesthetic systems – encourage sensing during somatic dance practices. In the teaching of dance science and dance technique, detailed instruction should remain separate as "dance is, first and foremost, an art form, and dance classes must maintain the sense that developing one's artistry, and the tools for expression are the primary goals."[79] However, embodiment of the kinesiological and neurological happenings can reinforce and deepen the learning. And in the reverse, a "basic working knowledge of anatomy, physiology, and kinesiology" helps in achieving "a greater depth of understanding the moving body."[80]

Since somatic practices rely on fundamental aspects of the body, understanding science and anatomy encourages the somatic practices through an experiential deepening of knowledge. It is my desire that through integration of somatics, dancers will have a greater understanding of how the body works on both intellectual and kinesthetic levels. This depth will result from background information coupled with sensing the embodiment of knowledge, putting the information into motion.

[79] Donna Krasnow, Dance Science and the Dance Technique Class, *Impulse*, 4 (1996), 163.
[80] Brodie and Lobel, 3.

"The agency body is our skeletal, muscular self, directing the volume body through space with an axis."[81] At its most basic level, movement is dependent upon the interaction of muscular and skeletal anatomy. In understanding the shape and location of bones you can locate their most effective stacking, a skill that holds much importance as "deviation from an ideal alignment causes imbalances throughout the whole body as the body attempts to maintain its balance against the force of gravity."[82] These muscular imbalances not only cause potential discomfort, but also can result in inefficient usage and injury. Taking the time to unpack and sense the skeletal system and how its parts relate to one another adds to our tools for preventing injury and accessing efficient muscular activation. This process contributes to our overall health, as the body

> works as an interconnected whole, change in any one part affects the area above or below and can affect the entire body. When the bones are aligned, all other systems can function more efficiently.[83]

One of the most important "truths" to understand in the body is the interrelatedness of all the parts, especially across systems – "change in one part changes the whole."[84] Although understanding the kinesthetic system is

[81] Andrea Olsen, The Place of Dance: A Somatic Guide to Dancing and Dance Making, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2014, 20.
[82] Celichowska, 9.
[83] Andrea Olsen, Body & Earth. University Press of New England: Hanover and London (2002).Olsen, 95.
[84] Peggy Hackney, Making Connections, New York, NY: Routledge, 2002, 39.

not necessary for application of somatic values, it is of utmost importance in all of these practices and can provide valid argumentation for disbelievers.

Let us take a moment to talk about perception and the kinesthetic sense, what they are, and how they relate to somatic practices. Perception is a "process that includes *sensing, interpretation,* and *response*,"[85] and so it is constantly at play. Our perception is impacted based on our experiences and our desires because it is "personally selective"[86] – there is individual difference. Each person takes in information differently based on past experiences and current state of being. Through somatic practices "we can heighten awareness of sensing, broaden patterns of interpretation, and encourage new pathways of response."[87]

Since we all have different strengths and preferences, it is beneficial to understand the sensory receptors involved in perception in order to "*act* from the sensory information available at the moment," rather than falling into habitual patterning.[88] The sensory receptors involved in perception are the interoceptors for "monitoring the inner workings of the body," exteroceptors for responding to our outer environment "including several kinds of sensation" and touch, and proprioceptors for "registering movement, balance, and body position in space."[89] These receptors work together to send information to our brains via afferent tracks, allowing us to perceive ourselves in our world.

[85] Olsen, The Place of Dance, 194.
[86] Olsen, Body & Earth, 56
[87] Olsen, Body & Earth, 55.
[88] Olsen, Body & Earth, 55.
[89] Olsen, Body & Earth, 57.

The proprioceptive receptors are especially important in dance practices, as they are located in the muscles, tendons, ligaments and joint capsules and aid with the kinesthetic sense by tracking changes in the body and/or limb position. Other systems involved are vestibular (inner ear) and haptic (the interface between organism and environment) – the interoceptors and exteroceptors certainly play a role in these systems.[90] The kinesthetic sense allows us to move in coordinated, consistent, efficient movement as the "desired action is compared to what is actually happening, and necessary adjustments are made."[91] In the most basic sense, this occurs because the proprioceptors send signals to the brain about the position of the muscles and bones in space. As we track these changes, the neuromuscular patterns are reorganized, "optimizing movement efficiency and expressivity."[92]

It is important to remember neuromuscular patterns can be reorganized, as this is how we learn new skills and increase muscular efficiency. Somatic practices are effective because the "kinesthetic sense can be trained," allowing adapting based on the signals sent to the brain from the proprioceptors.[93] During the application of somatic practices, and in learning new movement patterns, we deepen our abilities to continually tap into sensing of the body in space and in relation to self – we tune our ability to react to our proprioceptors' signals. Knowing the role of the proprioceptors and the kinesthetic sense, it is clear there is a "need to prepare the

[90] Brodie and Lobel, 62-63.
[91] Brodie and Lobel, 67.
[92] Brodie and Lobel, 68.
[93] Brodie and Lobel, 69.

neurological system" accordingly, meaning specifically for the requirements of dance.[94]

As the neurological system is responsible for making movement happen – via its communication with the musculoskeletal systems – dancers must prepare for the specific demands of their practice. For example, as dancers we operate in an increased range of motion for most joints in the body, we often work in external hip rotation or transition in and out of inverted positions, depending on the technique. These physical requirements, and others, entail activation of neurological demands different from movement efficiency within day-to-day pedestrian movement. This also means warming for expressivity. Application of somatic practices during the warm up phase encourages preparation of the neurological and musculoskeletal systems simultaneously.

Proprioception and the kinesthetic sense play an important role in motor learning: the process of learning a new movement skill through "re-coordination of neuromuscular pathways."[95] Although the driving goals in dance, motor learning, and somatic practices are different, we are consistently "reestablishing or reeducating the neuromuscular patterns, which are responsible for the movement patterns to a great extent."[96] Each time we learn a new dance step - or a new approach for one we previously mastered - we are going through the processes of motor learning, including honing the

[94] Krasnow, 165.
[95] Krasnow, 168.
[96] André Bernard, Wolfgang Steinmüller and Ursula Stricker, *Ideokinesis: A Creative Approach to Human Movement & Body Alignment,* Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2006, 14.

communication within the neuromuscular system. Our kinesthetic sense comes into play by analyzing where body parts are in space, putting together the pieces in comparison to desired movement, encouraging growth. In dance, the growth is through learning new steps, becoming more technically advanced, or developing artistry; in somatic practices, this means moving with increasing efficiency. When somatic values are integrated into dance practices, technical dance steps can be approached with greater efficiency through neuromuscular re-patterning.

The process of motor learning is intricately linked to specific somatic practices in several ways. For example, Mabel Todd, whose theories and practices built the foundation for Ideokinesis, "discussed the link between the body's alignment and how the brain sends messages to muscles,"[97] basing the development and validity of her practice on the scientific processes in the body. We will look more closely at Ideokinesis in relation to imagery in Chapter 3, but for now know its basis is images used to retrain the communication between the neurological and muscular systems.

Developed by Irmgard Bartenieff through work with polio patients, Bartenieff Fundamentals was created with the healing in mind, addressing re-patterning with specific health goals. The foundation for Bartenieff Fundamentals are the Patterns of Total Body Connectivity (PTBC) – Breath, Head-Tail, Core-Distal, Upper-Lower, Body Half, Cross-Lateral – leading up

[97] Krasnow, 167.

to fully- integrated connectivity.[98] Bartenieff Fundamentals and the PTBC are based on the process of human development. Exercises are often performed in "the Big X"[99] and allow the opportunity for individuals to reorganize their bodies. In doing so, adults can revisit patterns they may have skipped in initial development or patterns that have since been un-programmed through other trainings of the body. "Muscle sequencing is more important than muscle strength in producing coordinated movement,"[100] and the developmental patterns aid in phrasing of movement. Through the PTBC, muscular efficiency can be found, creating space for appropriate cueing during motor learning and make "a dancer more articulate, expressive and virtuosic."[101]

Body-Mind Centering (BMC) relates to dance, motor learning, and body sciences in a much different way. Developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen through explorations beginning in the 1960s, BMC is "a system of body exploration in which all of the body's anatomical systems are explored to bring awareness and meaning."[102] In this way, BMC is a mode of "developing an empirical science – observing, contrasting, corroborating and recording our experiences"[103] and outlining the growth of motor learning through tuning into the different systems. Through "identifying and

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[98] Hackney.
[99] Eddy. Traditional exercises exploring these patterns are often on the floor. They begin laying on the floor in an X-position. These have been passed down through somatic generations and are used in some modern classes for warming up.
[100] Hackney, 40.
[101] Geber and Wilson, 55.
[102] IADMS, *Somatic Studies and Dance,* 4.
[103] Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, Sensing, Feeling and Action: The Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering, Contact Editions. Northampton, MA: 2012, 2.

integrating different tissues of the body"[104] we reinforce our anatomical learning, creating maps of western science. This practice provides the opportunity for a deeper understanding of individual difference beyond the scientific textbooks and allows body to be source for understanding and movement. In dance, the scientific applications of BMC are more indirect, but still present.

Now that we have a better understanding of the science in somatics and the science *of* somatic practices, we can look at a dancer/choreographer who used the science of movement as inspiration. Erick Hawkins is a prime example of this as a dancer, choreographer and teacher. Hawkins, former Martha Graham dancer, spent much of his dancing, choreographing and teaching careers investigating how the science of movement informs dance training. In 1978, after twenty-seven years of exploring and developing basic movement principles – scientific "truths" – these investigations culminated in Erick Hawkins Modern Dance Technique: a technique Hawkins claimed was based on scientific truths of movement. Aiming to create a technique and training method differing from those of his contemporaries, Hawkins focused on what he referred to as pure movement, movement unattached to a specific dance genre and instead based on guiding principles and science rather than aesthetic preferences.[105]

In the 1970's Hawkins hoped that "the truth of how the body would be trained as a dancing instrument, without limitations and personal

[104] Cohen, 1.
[105] Celichowska, 138.

eccentricities, should be arrived at and used."[106] (Theoretically, if we applied Hawkins training technique to the dance world of today, most young dancers would be more versatile and able to dance any style). To reach this goal, Hawkins based the fundamentals of his modern dance technique on his belief in the existence of fundamental theories regarding the body in motion, including finding balance in the stacking of bones in alignment and their relationship in movement. More specifically, for Hawkins balance refers to balance of muscular "contraction and decontraction," with decontraction referring to a muscle that has released tension.[107] Another major movement principle in Hawkins technique is that "human movement starts in the spine and the pelvis"[108] and then "resonates through the spine into the rest of the body," [109] not unlike the concept of Core-Distal[110] in Bartenieff Fundamentals.[111] The very creation of Hawkins's technique relied on looking "to science for an affirmation of basic movement principles."[112] These principles were at the beginning of their exploration and definition when Hawkins was exploring, but today they fall under our kinesiological studies.

These driving ideas combined with Hawkins' focus on internal sensing and laid the foundation for his technique; at the basis of his teaching practice were scientific principles and somatic values. He was able to develop a

[106] Erick Hawkins, "Pure Poetry," In the Modern Dance: Seven Statements of Belief, edited by Selma Jeanne Cohen, 29-51, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1965, 45.
[107] Celichowska, 46.
[108] Hawkins, 41.
[109] Celichowska, 83.
[110] When referring to Laban terms I will capitalize the first letter in order to differentiate from the colloquial use.
[111] Hackney.
[112] Celichowska, 13.

technique around the precision of scientific applications while remembering, "the body is not divided from the mind, the soul."[113] Although scientific practices provided the basis for teaching practices, Hawkins was able to keep all aspects of being intertwined. By using scientific ideas of the Western world to support the tuning-in and concepts from Eastern Zen philosophy, Hawkins' technique is an example of how anatomical knowledge can be interwoven into dance practices as a basis for somatic integration. In doing so, he embedded somatic values of sensing and awareness in the body, finding balance and striving for movement efficiency while also stressing the importance of "inner quality," an attention and perception to allow movement to be "wondrous" and give movement significance.[114] Hawkins created one of the earliest forms of somatic-based modern dance technique by integrating somatic values of balance and sensing, basing his teaching on two pillars: his scientific movement theories and imagery encouraging sensation.

Erick Hawkins Modern Dance Technique provides a model for integrating science into the development of teaching. This, in turn, is reinforced by the belief of dance training that is stimulated by somatic values of kinesiological truths and inner-body sensing leads to more efficient movement, creating a healthier dancing body; "correct movement of the body leads to beautiful movement, and beautiful movement forms a beautiful

[113] Celichowska, 1.
[114] Hawkins, 39.

body."[115] This process of inner sensing enhances body awareness through experiential tuning in to individual difference.

Scientific information can also be integrated into dance practices in a more transparent manner. By presenting information during instructional practices, teachers provide a foundation for somatic practices. The process of presenting anatomical information will be different based on the class population. In anatomically knowledgeable and aware populations, teachers can surpass the anatomy review because students already know the background information. This population may require more time to tune in, especially when compared to a kinesthetically aware population. With a kinesthetically aware class, teachers may want to provide a concise description of anatomy before using any terms. These individuals may respond better to anatomically based sensory imagery. And finally, the populations made up of both types of people (or the individuals who fall somewhere in the middle) will most likely respond best to some combining of instructional technique. Presentation of simplified anatomy provides context that can be supported by imagery and sensation.

Regardless of the population, it is important to determine the base knowledge required to encourage a deeper sensation without turning the class into an anatomy course. "Anatomy offers a clear starting point for understanding efficiency across stylistic boundaries. Effective training

[115] Celichowska, 50.

programs seek balance in the body systems."[116] By bringing discussion of the anatomical structure into the dance studio we allow time for kinesthetic understanding, especially important because "as movers, dancers need to experience this information and make meaning from a number of perspectives."[117] Taking time to name parts gives points of reference for discussion; language deepens and solidifies individual difference in experience.

The somatic technique Ideokinesis and its lesson format provide a model for how science can serve as an introduction to a somatic experience.

> The lesson is usually divided into two parts: lecture and laboratory. In the lecture part, basic concepts of anatomy, physiology, and body mechanics are discussed. The images used in the laboratory part of the class are based upon this discussion.[118]

For this format to be beneficial, it must first be determined what information will enhance the somatic experience. For example, a practice focused on finding length in the spine with ease through the shoulder girdle would be enhanced by a discussion of location of various parts. By taking a moment to note the clavicle, ribs, pelvis and scapulae, each student has a clear understanding of where each of these points of reference is located. This is especially difficult when the experience is taken one step further, where

[116] Olsen, The Place of Dance, 32.
[117] Geber and Wilson, 56.
[118] Bernard, Steinmüller, and Stricker, 7.

partners provide tactile feedback, as effective hands-on information can only be provided when points of contact are defined. The "lesson" before the somatic experience can be as brief as one or two sentences, but sharing elicits the instructor to clarify language and terminology. This explanation diminishes confusion from students and therefore enriches experience.

Anatomy and science of movement can be applied in choreography as well. Erick Hawkins applied science to his choreography in a different manner. Often it influenced a somatic approach to his coaching rather than the development of choreography. I feel his movement derived from his images created based on his movement theories, rather than drawing from the science itself. I observed an edited clip of *Plains Daybreak*, choreographed by Erick Hawkins.[119] The dancers moved with freedom and fluidity. There was clearly energy flowing through the entire body, allowing for whole-body support. Although the arms and legs clearly tasseled from the pelvis and spine, there was movement and articulation of the spine, giving way to counterbalances. You could see the full embodiment and easefulness of each movement. "That was one of the hallmarks of Erick's work, the ease of the movement, and yet the movement had strength."[120] Hawkins trained the ability to sense while moving based on images supported by scientific truths, causing his dancers to perform with easeful power.

[119] Phil Butta, "Plains Daybreak Erick Hawkins Dance," *YouTube* video, 3:59, November 24, 2004. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZc5PcikuUI.
[120] Bernard, Steinmüller, and Stricker, 34.

Although created around scientific movement theories, according to Andrea Olsen "Erick Hawkins Dance Company and Hawkins's 'free flow' technique, developed fluid, seemingly effortless dancing and influenced the emerging field of somatic practices."[121] Often, ease and efficiency during performance are evidence of the application of scientific theories. This ease is encouraged by specific language, including imagery.

Even Hawkins utilized a significant amount of imagery to reinforce his movement theories in teaching dance. Although we will discuss imagery in detail in Chapter 3, it is important to note that the imagery brings the science into a place of sensation. Science and imagery exist as the pillars of somatic theories when they enhance one another through supportive interplay. Scientific theories explain why somatic practices work, while other scientific ideas allow for deeper internal explorations. In both circumstances the science available informs integration and application within dance practices to heighten sensation and efficiency.

[121] Olsen, The Place of Dance, 51.

Chapter Three
Imagery and its Applications within Somatic Integration

Many somatic practices, including Ideokinesis, Body-Mind Centering, Alexander Technique and Bartenieff Fundamentals use imagery as means for deepening reflection, enhancing the ability to tune-in and listen to movement and alignment in the body. In some of these techniques – especially Alexander Technique and Ideokinesis - imagery is used to redirect neuromuscular pathways, encouraging ease and muscle efficiency. Ideokinesis, "a discipline that employs the use of images as a means of improving muscle patterns," is a somatic system based primarily on the use of imagery.[122] Since imagery is a foundational aspect in many somatic practices – and therefore is one of my pillars of somatic principles – I sought out to investigate how imagery is utilized in dance practices, and perhaps how it could be used more efficiently with increasing frequency. In this chapter, I will share my findings throughout this process.

I began my investigations of imagery by clarifying exactly what is meant by 'imagery.' From this definition, I thought about the types of imagery I use as a teacher, what I respond to as a student, and imagery that was lost on me. Seeking more advanced uses of imagery, I observed skilled professors teaching technique classes. These observations included taking mental notes while participating in a modern class, observing an undergraduate modern technique class and a university level advanced ballet class. Each image was sorted into semi-flexible categories. After, I reflected

[122] Bernard, Steinmüller, and Stricker, 3.

on the qualities that deem imagery effective – is it specific language, timing, application, or all of this combined?

Defining imagery was possibly the most daunting task as I began to wonder if everything was an image – after all, language is a representation of experience, a means of communication. For now, when using the term "imagery," I will be referring to the definition from literarydevices.net: "To use figurative language to represent objects, actions and ideas in such a way that appeals to our physical senses."[123] When gathering images, this definition guided whether or not a word or phrase was further explored and categorized, though I continued to question how we appeal to the kinesthetic sense. Ideokinesis practitioner André Bernard sorted his imagery into anatomical and abstract, or "non-anatomical imagery."[124] I embraced these categories and added a few more: visual, a person, another idea/concept/technique, and complex combinations. We will look at how each category is defined, its application to dance, and a few images in each, but the categorization of the entirety of my findings (not an exhaustive list, rather an exercise in categorizing the images encountered in this phase of my research) can be found in Appendix A.

Categorizing Images

It is important to remember that these imagery categories are flexible, often overlapping and supporting one another. Images do not always fall clearly in one specific category. The first major category is Abstract. My

[123] Literarydevices.net, (Accessed October 2014).
[124] Bernard, Steinmüller, and Stricker, 25.

abstract category is more than Bernard's "non-anatomical,"[125] in that many certainly represent the skeletal structure, but there are other types as well. It is also more cohesive than the typical "catchall" grouping in most categorizing methods. Some of the imagery may seem impossible, but abstract imagery allows each individual to interpret personally. I have broken this category down into the sub-categories of nonsensical, textural, feelings, foods and et cetera.

Karl Rogers (Assistant Professor in the Department of Dance at The State University of New York College at Brockport)[126] applies abstract imagery while teaching Modern Technique to incoming undergraduate dance majors. Perhaps most memorable from the class I observed was his use of the image of a paintball hitting a surface.[127] By using this image, Rogers is nonsensically encouraging that all body parts are splayed in different direction while simultaneously evoking a movement quality representing the texture of a splatter. Textural images, such as the paintball, can encourage internal sensation. Others include pouring, spilling, tumbling, liquid feet. Or, textural images can suggest changes in the space around the mover, either with the air thickening or the space filling with other contents such as water. Some textural images I encountered taking class, including "scrubbing of the

[125] Bernard, Steinmüller, and Stricker, 25.
[126] Karl Rogers, Dancer, choreographer and dance scholar. Dancer in David Dorfman Dance and Artistic Director of Red Dirt Dance. Assistant Professor of Dance and Graduate Program Director in the Department of Dance at The State University of New York, College at Brockport. http://www.brockport.edu/dance/people/krogers.html (Accessed April 2015).
[127] Rogers.

heart-space,"[128] allow for interpretation of scrubbing internally or externally. In each of these, there is room for individual experiences based on personal sensation.

Just as with Ideokinesis, I have defined an anatomical category, which is based on the "movement of the bony structure,"[129] muscular structure and sometimes the organs, and the way parts relate to one another. When focusing on the bony structure I have explored initiating movement from the scapula to encourage coordinated movement within the scapulohumeral rhythm. In this process I am able to think about the specific bones – maybe even refer to a visual aid of them as a reminder – and imagine the articulation of the scapula and its relationship with the humerus. Muscularly, I may think about the specific muscles activating in order to find appropriate muscular sequencing for increasing efficiency. In my experience, this means activating the scapular stabilizers (such as the serratus anterior and latissimus dorsi) to allow movement of the arm from the rotator cuff, as opposed to lifting from the superficial muscles (including the trapezius). This muscular activation comes into play when attempting to avoid lifting the shoulders when bringing the arms overhead.

For me, muscular and skeletal imagery comes more easily, while tapping into organ imagery proves a bit more difficult. One active organ image I found successful was in modern technique class with William (Bill)

[128] Stevie Oakes, Assistant Professor of Dance, The College at Brockport. Currently teaches Modern Technique, Kinesiology, Dance Conditioning, and Open Ballet. Observation October 2014. Modern Dance Technique, The College at Brockport, Brockport, NY.
[129] Bernard, Steinmüller, and Stricker, 25.

Evans. When in relevé I would have my weight too far forward, as though sending energy through the sternum. In these moments Evans would encourage me, and others, to fill the back half of my lungs.[130] At first I needed a lot of concentration, but as I was reminded in subsequent classes and encouraged before leaving to practice in my daily life, this shift came with more ease. By filling the back half of my lungs I was able to shift my weight and adjust the way my skeleton stacked in relation to gravity. The image of filling the back half of my lungs provided motivation, encouraged me to sense where I could send my breath, and allowed for ease through the sternum during movement.

So far the images gathered have been from modern technique classes, but imagery is also a large part of ballet technique. Certified Laban Movement Analyst and classically trained ballet dancer, Cadence Whittier, uses imagery and metaphor while applying theories of Laban Movement Analysis and Bartenieff Fundamentals to teaching classical ballet at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, NY.[131] In her ballet technique classes "movement is often thought of in imagistic and metaphorical ways."[132] In addition to bright and vivid colors, Whittier uses abstract images such as the arms as peacock feathers and the legs grounding into the Earth as roots of a tree.[133] While it is not imagery alone that shapes these ballet classes, it certainly plays a large role in the shaping of Whittier's pedagogy. Whittier

[130] William (Bill) Evans.
[131] Cadence Whittier, Laban Movement Analysis Approach to Classical Ballet Pedagogy, Journal of Dance Education, Vol 6, Number 4, 2006, p 124-132.
[132] Whittier, 126.
[133] Whittier, 126.

finds the use of imagery "creates a more dynamic interaction between their bodies and the movement pathways that their bodies create in the space."[134]

Vanessa VanWormer (Director of Chamber Ballet Brockport in the Department of Dance at The State University of New York College at Brockport)[135] also applies her somatic sensibility while teaching ballet. VanWormer employs abstract anatomical imagery teaching phrase material at the barre when she suggests the tailbone "floats" back, suggesting not only a point of initiation and a direction, but also a movement quality.[136] I observed a greater lightness in her students during this movement at the barre after she gave this image. Anatomical abstraction also takes place when imagining the spine as a string of pearls dangling from the skull.[137] The image of the string of pearls suggests lightness while addressing the individuality of each vertebra and its relationship to the others. While attempting to embody this image, I experienced a greater ease and length through my spine after layering the abstract imagery of the pearls on the anatomical image.

Although our definition of imagery is figurative language, imagery can also include actually seeing – which is where the visual category comes into play. This involves not just descriptions, but actually seeing people, videos, pictures or representations of the body, perhaps a skeleton in the room. In

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[134] Whittier, 126.
[135] Visiting Professor at The State University of New York, College at Brockport. Director of Chamber Ballet Brockport, ballet performance company. Artistic Director of Vanessa VanWormer Dance. http://www.brockport.edu/dance/people/vvanworm.html, http://www.vanessavanwormer.com, (Accessed April 2015).
[136] VanWormer.
[137] VanWormer.

Susan Foster's *Dancing Bodies,* she presents the idea of a demonstrative body, which often exaggerates and emphasizes actions in order to improve dancing.[138] I agree with Foster in that an accurate demonstration can provide a visual of a dancer's goals. This is especially true in a ballet class, including the class I observed during which VanWormer often presented the desired movement in addition to speaking. Students in the class, providing options for similarity and dissimilarity, can also perform demonstrations. "Images of other dancers' bodies, and cinematic or video images of dancing bodies" are other options for visual imagery, and may be utilized as reinforcement of concepts outside of the studio.[139]

The next two categories are closer in likeness to imagery in literature and are less reliant on sensing. Although similar to visual imagery, imagery in the Person category refers to a specific person who is not in the room. Most effective results rely on choosing a person well known by the population including another student, instructor, or famous person. For example, Rogers called upon Fred Astaire and oompa loompas for reference while teaching phrase work.[140] Similarly, Stevie Oakes (Assistant Professor in the Department of Dance at The State University of New York College at Brockport) reminds students of neuromuscular patterning developed in other

[138] Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing Bodies" in Meaning in Motion, edited by Jane C. Desmond, Duke University Press: Durham & London (1997), 237-238.
[139] Foster, 237.
[140] Rogers.

modern technique classes by naming certain movements after other faculty members.[141]

When we relate sensation to another movement practice, rather than a person, the imagery falls into the next category, Another Idea/Concept/Technique. In the teaching of plié, VanWormer relates the movement to both a Limón swing and the buoyancy of a basketball to suggest desired movement quality.[142] By providing both, she allows dancers with varying backgrounds to draw from previous movement experiences. In a different vein, Rogers pulled from "shuffle off to Buffalo" in teaching a tricky foot pattern in his phrase work.[143] While the intended movement was different, the reference to something familiar aims for quick sequencing retention and the ability to recall at a later date.

The final category comes into existence as we become more adept at understanding and employing imagery, and we can begin to create complex combinations. Previously we addressed layering that can occur by abstracting anatomy, but that is just the beginning of complexities available through imagery. Rogers combines anatomy and visual, first describing, pointing to and picturing anterior superior iliac spines (ASIS), and then adds abstraction by relating the bringing together of the ASIS to the uniting of Middle Eastern countries.[144] Images become more complex by involving several body parts in a balloon (working leg) tied to a sandbag (standing leg

[141] Oakes.
[142] VanWormer.
[143] Rogers.
[144] Rogers.

providing weight and grounding), encouraging equal investment in both legs rather than just the working leg.[145]

These categories served more as an organizing strategy for this process and for accessing different types of imagery. Having a variety of images on hand is beneficial as certain images may be relevant for one person (or a group of people) and not for another. I have found there are differences in impact of image reliant on several variables, including personal experiences, age and level of dance. Certainly, age is straight forward – as individuals develop, absorb additional information, and obtain higher critical thinking skills, more images are available for reference. Similarly, higher-level dancers can relate to a wider variety of images while retaining and layering several images, as they would with multiple ideas of dance technique. These layered images can refer to different body parts, or one may call upon technical demands while another evokes desired movement qualities. Sanna M. Nordin and Jennifer Cumming conducted a study in 2005, based on previous studies performed with athletes, investigating the frequency and uses of imagery by different level dancers.[146] Conclusions of this study indicated not only that "higher level dancers more frequently obtained images from teachers," but also that "elite dancers…more often layered their images," allowing for multiple purposes.[147] By layering, dancers are able to access technique, emotion, quality, or movement repertory simultaneously, but with

[145] Rogers.
[146] Sanna M. Nordin & Jennifer Cumming, "Where, When, and How," Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 78:4, 390.
[147] Nordin & Cumming, 394.

different images – not unlike learning the alphabet and combining letters in new arrangements to create new words.

Effective uses of Imagery

With all of these different factors at play, how can we determine when imagery is successful? If we are only interested in neuromuscular repatterning, we may refer to Bernard's theories in Ideokinesis. He would tell us:

> the image, in order to work, needs to make a strong imprint on the nervous system, and in order to do that it has to be unusual. It should not be boring, and it should be of great interest. It can achieve those objectives by being outrageous, ridiculous, or so beautiful, or anything that is excessive, in order to grab the attention of the nervous system.[148]

Anecdotally, this recalls some of the images discussed earlier, like the paintball. I do not often think of myself in relation to a paintball, so even as an observer this idea was of great interest. But how, in the moment, do we know if the imagery was effective?

As a mover accessing imagery there are several things that can happen for me to consider it helpful. First, if there is a sensation in reaction to the imagery I say it is a success – even if the movement has not yet visibly changed. Second, and possibly the following step in progression, imagery is effective when I find a new approach to the movement, perhaps I am able to

[148] Bernard, Steinmüller, and Stricker, 23.

access the desired movement with greater ease. Third, the movement feels more bodily integrated and supported, perhaps less awkward. And finally, I am able to access the requested movement quality from a deeper, sensate place. Each of these successes can happen independently, but as imagery continues to layer, they could all occur simultaneously.

When instructing a room (or studio) full of dancers, the success becomes a little more difficult to determine, and may differ depending on the purpose of the image. When images from more than one category were used simultaneously, I observed increased success from more individuals in the class. If aiming to improve dance technique, or invite a greater sense of total body connectivity, I believe we see these changes as instructors regardless of the tools used. The purpose of the imagery here is to provide an idea of the internal sensation, which will then cause changes in shape, alignment, or approach to movement. If we see the changes, then there is success with the image, though many times different images may need to be utilized to reach the entire population of the class.

However, imagery to evoke a chosen movement quality may actually have a larger range of gradation in change, based on where students are prior. Let us consider Laban Effort qualities for a moment. If we imagine two students, one who preferences Strong Weight and one who preferences Light Weight, both are being asked to imagine a helium balloon tied to their sternums while reaching towards the ceiling with an arm. While both will most likely access Light Weight, the one who preferences Strong Weight may

not show as much change as the student who accesses Light Weight often and feels comfort there. So with movement qualities, as with other types of growth, success is in relation to the starting point for each individual.

We may also consider building context of the imagery. Since bodily reactions to images depend on individual experience, there may be more success if the image is built within a scenario to centralize everyone. For example, Rogers also shared an anecdote about when he was out to dinner. At the time, when he was sharing his story about the two little boys at the next table getting bendy straws with their drinks and the excitement that ensued, I admit I was a bit perplexed. Truly, the story did not set the students up for what they were being asked – to allow one side of the body to lengthen while the other side shortens, as a bendy straw does. However, as I sit here now and can clearly recall the story that set up the image, as well as the image, I realize that the context Rogers provided allows for recall of the image several months later.

In this particular situation, Rogers was using this image as a way to give feedback and encourage body connectivity within a movement pattern. According to International Association for Dance Medicine & Science (IADMS), "verbal instruction should be secondary, especially when the dancers are seeing and learning a task for the first time."[149] By observing, then giving imagery before the students repeated the phrase, he allowed for absorption of the image. It served not only as feedback, but also as cuing for

[149] IADMS, Motor Learning and Teaching Dance, 3.

the neuromuscular system. This is my preference for giving and receiving imagery in terms of feedback, but there are other timings that can be used effectively. If there is an image on hand, it can be given before movement is even performed – as in Ideokinesis and other motor learning development practices. William (Bill) Evans uses this application, giving image cuing before even the preparation for movement occurs.[150] Imagery can also be given while students are moving, allowing for change to happen during (different from giving feedback between repetitions as a means of feedback).

And finally, images can be given after movement has occurred, even without the opportunity for a repeat. The benefit of this use is the time allowed for bodily wisdom to take over, transforming information on a cellular level rather than intellectually. There is also more opportunity for visualization immediately following, or later, before performing movement again. Ideally, visualization encourages the imagination to create movement. Rather than the "eyes generating the image and conveying it to the motor cortex," the appropriate image will allow the mind to "establish neuromuscular pathways that correspond to the actual motor performance of the movement."[151] This process is beneficial to train neuromuscular pathways before navigating the skeleton through complex movement material in space. In dance this could mean attempting new movement, transitioning to one leg, shifting weight, or orienting the body in a new relationship to gravity.

[150] Evans, BETI 2014.
[151] Brodie and Lobel, 91.

Ultimately, different timings are effective depending on the purpose of the image and interact with various factors in application.

In short, effective imagery cannot be determined without its context and purpose. Each time we use imagery we should consider the population, and what we are hoping to impress on our students – or ourselves. Does the image serve to enhance motor learning, alter aesthetic movement quality, or remind dancers of choreographic sequencing? From here we may take note of how we layer images and what additional images may be helpful in order to refresh ideas and excite the nervous system again. Regardless, it is important to give time and space for each image to resonate, without bogging down the neuromuscular processing.

But, why?

We have categorized imagery and determined how to use it most effectively, but why do we use it? To encourage awareness, establish efficient muscle patterns and expand individual range of movement qualities. Susan Foster believes dance training "creates two bodies: one, perceived and tangible; the other, aesthetically ideal."[152] The dancer's perceived body is comprised of information collected from many the senses; it is a collection of what is seen, heard, felt, experienced, smelled externally, as well as the kinesthetic sensation of internal skeletal and muscular relationships. Meanwhile, the ideal body is the goal, it is the reason a dancer trains; it

[152] Foster, 237.

represents technical and artistic perfection in the eye of each dancer.[153] The imagery is a way to tap into the nervous system allowing choice of the most efficient muscle pattern, and listening to sensation to encourage awareness.[154] As the "perceived body derives primarily from sensory information that is visual, aural, haptic, olfactory, and perhaps most important, kinaesthetic,"[155] imagery is crucial in encouraging dancers to tap into their sensations of self, bringing the perceived body closer to the tangible body, and hopefully, closer to the aesthetically ideal body. It is important to be able to accurately perceive where body parts in space, and then make appropriate adjustments for correctness. This process allows for continual training and patterning while learning new movement material in dance.

Applications

Now that we have established why imagery will assist growth in dance we will consider where it intersects with individual dance practices. In a straightforward somatic practice, imagery guides the experience. In some, like Ideokinesis, the entire lesson may be shaped by an image. In dance, however, the applications are more wide spread. Imagery still encourages a deeper sensory experience, but it has different roles in teaching, performing and choreographing.

Due to the process of gathering imagery, we have already had a glimpse into how imagery can be used in teaching dance technique. Imagery

[153] Foster, 237.
[154] Bernard, Steinmüller, and Stricker, 15.
[155] Foster, 237.

can be used as a means of teaching phrase material, pointing out technical skills, or repatterning body connectivity. Use of different types of imagery allows for acknowledgement of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences,[156] as evidenced simply by the name of the categories. While "providing sensory-based feedback and/or imagery may assist the student in repatterning or learning new neuromuscular pathways,"[157] touch feedback from an instructor or partner can enhance – or encourage if it is blocked – sensation. It is important to remember, as instructors, imagery can be derived from sensation, but taste and smell can also cause specific bodily reactions. Also, when live musicians are available, they are able to assist with imagery in the form of "auditory cues [which] include rhythmic music along with teacher's verbal counting and clapping – designed to reinforce placement, timing and quality of effort."[158] Even when musicians are unavailable, changing the tone, speed or quality of your voice, or using sound effects can serve as audible imagery.

Not many dance scholars discuss the role of imagery in the choreographic process and performance applications, though I find it is often used to encourage artistry and hone technical skills. I will discuss my experience applying imagery while developing choreography in Chapter Four.

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[156] Multiple Intelligences, http://multipleintelligencesoasis.org/about/the-components-of-mi/, Accessed Wednesday, April 1, 2015.
[157] Brodie and Lobel, 77.
[158] Glenna Batson, Improving Postural Control in the Battement Tendu: One Teacher's Reflections and Somatic Exercises, *Journal of Dance Education,* Vol. 10, No. 1 (2010), 7.

Let us revisit the definition of imagery. Just as a reminder, literarydevices.net considers imagery to be figurative language to appeal to our physical senses. While this is certainly part of imagery, it also involves "thought, desire, intention, insight, and attention,"[159] especially when being applied to neuromuscular repatterning and movement quality. Further, imagery is a means of tapping into the kinesthetic sense with sensation obtained via input from the physical senses. By "utilizing feedback and images that are rich to the sensorium and that emphasize feeling…[it] can help students access the kinesthetic sense."[160] Although imagery does not directly relate to kinesthesia, it is the language needed to gain access. Therefore, our new working-definition of imagery, in relation to somatic practices and somatic integration, is the following: figurative language to represent objects, actions, ideas and sensations in such a way that appeals to our physical senses and gives access to our kinesthetic sense. This last part is key, in that it defines the purpose of imagery in somatics and justifies the benefit of bringing the somatic sensibility of imagery into personal dance practices.

[159] Bernard, Steinmüller, and Stricker, 15.
[160] Brodie and Lobel, 78.

Chapter Four
Somatic Choreographic Reflections

Several choreographers are explicit in their use of somatics during choreographic endeavors. This includes Somatic Movers – a "modern dance company that not only explores what is moving, but also why it's moving and how it's moving," – defining the purpose of their company as investigating key aspects of kinesthetic awareness cultivated through somatic practices.[161] Emily Faulkner Dance is another who focuses on choreography driven by "innate body/mind intelligence."[162] I enter my choreographic process with somatic theories similar to the Christina Houghton's approach discussed in Chapter 1. Rather than aiming to put somatic practices on stage, presenting a visual of these experiences to the audience, I enter each rehearsal with my somatic knowledge in hand to encourage the embodiment found through somatic practices. It is my desire that somatic training and application of somatic values will encourage ease in movement and an ability to acknowledge inner sensation, yet at the same time dancers must access full performance level – as performers, not as experiencers of somatic practices. Ultimately, I am requesting that my dancers find the balance between internal sensation and external information, accessing full awareness.

[161] SomaticMovers, "Home," SomaticMovers, http://somaticmovers.com/ (Accessed April 20, 2013).
[162] Emily Faulkner Dance, "About," Emily Faulkner Dance, http://eafaulkner.wix.com/windupdance-2#!about (Accessed 20, 2013).

While creating the choreographic work *sinksizzlesimmersync*[163] I certainly had my somatic values – existence of truths about the body, honoring sensation, and ease of movement - in mind each day. In this chapter I reflect on this choreographic process and discuss how my somatic values were introduced in the studio with my somatic pillars (scientific knowledge and imagery) providing inroads to defining a common ground. After, I will share successes and struggles, common aspects of both choreographic endeavors and somatic journeys. There was an ongoing tension between the demands of performance and the idealized somatic experience. This included accessing speed in movement despite the somatic need to often slow down in order to experience, pushing the body limits within aesthetic choice while maintaining movement efficiency, sensing internally while addressing the external performance awareness, and allowing individual differentiation within set (and often unison) material.

How did I integrate my somatic values into my rehearsal process? They were certainly influential in creating the work as well as creating an environment I wanted to be a part of each day. While I was absolutely making the decisions as a director spatially, compositionally, and programmatically, the rehearsals functioned as collaboration. Choreography was generated from a myriad of sources, including phrases derived from an investigation of individual anatomy. Each dancer's artistic voice was present. Each dancer's agency was fostered by the presence of my somatic values – I

[163] Premiered DANCE/Strasser, Strasser Studio, Hartwell Hall, The College at Brockport, SUNY, March 5-7, 2015.

trusted the mechanics of the body I know to be true as I generated movement material, dancers were invited to sense individual body experience, and each was encouraged to find ease of movement based on sensation.

During rehearsals we took time to tune into our bodies, allowing a dialogue between mind and body during movement, and creating opportunity for responsiveness and adaptability. The experience revolved around the process, rather than the product. Throughout the process we created a community – a dance family – based on trust. Our time together became our safe space to reset, discover and play with movement away from the rest of the world. Knowing each other on an intimate level brought us much closer and created more organic movement. I also enjoyed how we transformed with the piece, through all the changes (outside life obstacles and all involved) and how it successfully created a beautiful piece in our own translation of movement.

In coaching my dancers for performance I worked with using somatic principles such as sensory imagery. In addition, I experimented with dynamics using more codified Laban language – words like Strong, [164] Light, Sustained, Quick – in order to expand and clarify qualitative range of the choreography. A section of this piece developed from focus on applying the extremes of Weight Effort and Time Effort. I aimed to push myself to reach beyond my preferences and push the end limits of these Efforts. To do this, I designed and followed a process for movement generation and coaching that

[164] When referring to Laban terms I will capitalize the first letter in order to differentiate from the colloquial use

integrated extremes on the Weight Effort gradation scale while choosing movement located towards points within the Directional Matrix,[165] based on Laban's theories of Space Harmony.[166]

The Directional Matrix consists of twenty-seven points placed on three different levels, similar to the cube Trisha Brown used in her choreographic explorations while creating *Locus*.[167] My hopes were to explore varying approaches to creating movement while finding clarity in communication and decision-making during rehearsals. Placing myself in the center of the Directional Matrix, I selected points to direct the right fingertips while encouraging supportive inner shaping of the entire body. By choosing specific points there was immediately increased clarity. Individual difference was encouraged as each dancer interpreted the material, simultaneously prompted to experiment with different approaches to her Kinesphere. This meant that while each dancer was ultimately going towards the same point, there was difference in Central, Peripheral and Transverse Spatial Tensions. Although this was intended to allow for maximal integration within each performer, it also created variation and interest in the choreography.

The process continued with coaching of challenging the extremes of Light Weight and Strong Weight, and especially with Quick and Sustained Time. The contrast between Quick and Sustained Time continuously showed

[165] The Directional Matrix is the Dimensional Cross intersecting with the Cube, Newlove & Dalby, 141.
[166] Jean Newlove & John Dalby, *Laban for All,* Rudolf Laban explored Plato's solids in developing his theories of Space Harmony. He then referred to these as five 'crystals,' p23-61
[167] Trisha Brown: An Interview, *The Twentieth Century Reader,* edited by Teresa Brayshaw and Noel Witts, Routledge: New York, NY (2014), 125.

up in the choreographing of *sinksizzlesimmersync;* we spent a lot of time working with words and sensations to simulate urgency and slowness. Internal sensations were most often provided in order to move with sustainment, though sometimes they were supported by images of the environment interacting with the body – moving in water, feeling the texture of the floor, and so on. When it came to moving with urgency the dancers experimented with ideas of being late, having internal drive, building momentum, and racing one another (mostly external factors). One of the dancers had a particular aptitude for moving quickly and became the energetic motor for the others to race against. The hope was to move towards quickness, yet not quite rushed in order to keep a calm, easefulness.

My somatic pillars – scientific knowledge and imagery - supported these choices. In some circumstances learning and application of anatomy can occur simultaneously during the choreographic process. While creating movement, I presented the basic structure of the shoulder joint alongside its articulation and coordinated movement with the scapula. I asked my dancers to palpate each other's skeletal anatomy at the shoulder, paying particular attention to how the scapulohumeral rhythm affects movement. The dancers were encouraged to cause movement in their partner, who was sensing how their bones were being manipulated. From here each dancer improvised based on the sensation of movement in this area of their bodies. Next, each dancer created a short movement phrase based on their improvisational

experience. These short phrases were compiled into a larger phrase encompassing everyone's experiences.

This process required learning about regional anatomy, its functioning, and then sensing it in order to create movement. Since the phrase was created from recalling improvisational experience (rather than from watching a video of the improvisation), each dancer brought different types of upper body movement, some initiating from fingertips while others allowed their scapulae to drive the movement. However, as it came together the dancers allowed the interactions between fingertips, arms, scapulae, ribs and spine to take different forms, while simultaneously shaping the space around them through actions such as carving, arcing and slicing. As an observer, I imagined the movement to be indulgent and gooey as the scapulae slid across the ribcage and the arms encompassed the space around the dancers' bodies.

This movement ended up being a large section of the choreography, which is especially interesting since I did not have a preconceived idea of what movement would transpire from this exploration. My inspiration was the sensation I experienced while improvising movement initiated from the scapula and shoulder joint. During this process my dancers and I discovered each dancer experiences the movement of her shoulder differently and prefers specific movements. Keeping with the nature of somatics, we remained process-oriented while creating this movement material; none of this movement was an anticipated goal. At the same time, I was pleased the process resulted in dancing that was exciting and fluid.

In the teaching of movement material in choreography, I use similar applications of imagery as if teaching a technique class – applying imagery to aid in finding ease in new movement patterns. When it comes to the process and the desire for artistry, however, I have explored a few options. Imagery can also be used to draw connections and recall chunks of movement material, or versions of choreography. Imagery can be used when looking for individual differences around the same idea. For example, I asked my dancers to create movement that they thought of when thinking of joy, or an endorphin high. We also played with the idea of another person as an image for a couple of weeks. Each dancer observed another for a week and then created a phrase based on the "image" they had compiled of that person. The resulting movement material was interesting to watch, and it was already integrated as the dancers processed the information from a sensory place rather than the idea of shape.

These applications carry over into performance and can be accessed by each individual before or during. Regardless of how the image was initially presented, it becomes a tool for recalling movement throughout the rehearsal process and even on stage. When used to access desired movement qualities the imagery can be a conscious thought to provide consistency even with the adrenaline and added energies involved in performance. With my dancers, I encouraged them to tap into specific sensations to encourage sustained movement during performance. By imagining and sensing the touch of the floor on the bottoms of their feet, they were better able to balance while

walking slowly backwards into the space. Use of imagery in performance falls more on the shoulders of the individual performer and is certainly a choice based on preference and personal successes.

Now that I have shared a general idea of how I integrate somatic values into my creative practices, I would like to revisit the choreographic tensions I mentioned earlier. I found difficulty encouraging my dancers to access quickness, knowing that slowing down invites deeper experiencing. This led directly into pushing body limits while maintaining movement efficiency – how can I push my dancers to move quickly, in large ranges of motion, while suggesting muscular ease? And finally, within set (and often unison) movement material, how is individual differentiation present?

In order to pay particular attention to messages being sent to the brain through the neurological pathways, movement is often slowed in somatic practices.[168] Taking time requires patience and allows processes to shift and choices to be made. While generating movement material and paying particular attention to sensation, everything was much slower. Eventually we tossed out the slower tempo and movement was much faster for performance. For me, the experiencing of slower movement is easier to sense, but the mix of faster movement was much more exciting. We built to the faster movement through experimenting with building of momentum and then letting it go. My desire was for my dancers to find increased ease by generating movement from sensation and applying somatic concepts, such as

[168] Brodie and Lobel, 26.

breath support. It is this ease and fluidity discovered in the process that allows for faster movement to occur while the building of momentum allows bodies to ride the wave rather than powering through muscularly. This idea was certainly influenced by Erick Hawkins's mantra "tight muscles don't feel," as I wanted my dancers to move and sense simultaneously.[169] Rather than powering through, they were aware of what was going on in their bodies while moving by opening pathways for change and sensation.

Another struggle I encountered was "movement efficiency is considered a central theme of somatics…however, aesthetic range immediately decreases if efficiency becomes the primary goal of movement."[170] For my dancers, this meant finding maximum range, but using the least muscular engagement possible – they needed to "distinguish between desired muscular effort and excessive work,"[171] since this piece did not ask for the display of work needed to perform the movement. As they performed the piece multiple times and found increased muscular fatigue, finding ease was necessary to avoid ultimate exhaustion. Ease was found through letting go of unnecessary muscular activation, finding breath support by allowing exhalations, and by exploring the gradation of energy that could be emitted in various sections of the piece (understanding when the movement could be like a whisper versus yelling).

[169] Celichowska, 19.
[170] Geber and Wilson, 58.
[171] Geber and Wilson, 58.

Creating movement through embodied exploration resulted in the "fluid effortless style of movement"[172] similar to the one valued by Erick Hawkins. In moments of stillness there was clearly energy flowing through the entire body, allowing for whole-body support. I have discovered that much of the language around Hawkins' work reflects my personal dance values. Certainly, I find value in movement appearing effortless, but still exploring a wide dynamic range. Hawkins' application of explorations with movement principles through imagery to invite attention to sensation, brings together my somatic pillars, and addresses how scientific knowledge can inform a somatic ease.

Internal awareness is crucial in making quick decisions regarding transfer of weight or releasing of muscular tension in order to find the desired efficiency. However, as performers, we often are expected to acknowledge our audience, bringing our focus outward. In *sinksizzlesimmersync* I asked my dancers to navigate the balance between these two foci. Sometimes this meant a shift of literal eye focus, and other times it meant quickly changing from one mental task to another. Andrea Olsen discusses the possibility for the simultaneous input from both internal and external sources in her book *Body and Earth.*[173] In a chapter devoted to perception, Olsen describes the different receptors sending information to the brain and the choice we can make in deciding what to acknowledge. So, in addition to training

[172] Erick Hawkins Dance, "history," Erick Hawkins Dance, http://www.erickhawkinsdance.org/#history (Accessed May 8, 2014).
[173] Olsen, Body and Earth, 56.

choreography, my dancers were practicing choosing responses to different types of input. Sometimes this meant a distinct focus on the sensations in the body, especially in sustained movement, or a reminder to exhale during specific phrases. Other times I reminded my dancers to be aware of their external environment by making eye contact and connecting with one another. To me, the ability to address information internally and externally simultaneously (or swiftly alternating between the two) is the ultimate awareness.

As I hoped to create a piece in which each of my dancers is able to embody (or present) her individuality on stage, I honored individual difference in many ways throughout the process, deriving movement phrases based on personal sensations. For example, I asked my dancers to consider the sensations associated with serenity or satisfaction and then create movement emanating those sensations. Here, the commonality was the particular emotion, though motivation and sensation certainly differed for each. The five dancers tried on each other's experiences and ultimately created what we called our "endorphin phrase," as performing it gave similar feelings as the endorphins after exercising. Most of the movement involved expansiveness, spiraling and swirling. Each dancer was able to generate momentum and ride the movement through the phrase. This often led to differences in timing, as each dancer would indulge at different moments and then allow the momentum to drive them through others. The movement

sequence echoed the feeling of satisfaction and wholeness that inspired the individual steps in the phrase.

A tool that I used throughout my choreographic process while giving feedback to my dancers was "asking directed questions, providing images, or suggesting desired kinesthetic sensations."[174] Choice of language can completely shift a typical experience into a somatic experience. In addition, touch "by oneself, a surface, or another person can be a wonderful inroad for increasing awareness of the wholeness, as well as the boundaries, of the body."[175] Specific touch – from self, instructor or a partner - is helpful in encouraging sensation and efficiency as it "can reawaken sensitivity,"[176] sending information to neurons, allowing feedback additional to verbal within body. I used touch when dancers were struggling with where to send their weight in movement or to encourage falling. In moments when my dancers walked with extreme sustainment, I asked them to notice the sensations of contact between the bottoms of their feet and the floor. It can also be used in teaching a new skill or approaching a dance step with different integration. Using somatic values in giving feedback (during choreography or teaching) allows individual difference to exist while encouraging full-bodied integration.

Much of this choreographic work was based on an unconventional complex and specific improvisational score. Unconventional in the sense that

[174] Brodie and Lobel, 19.
[175] Brodie and Lobel, 78.
[176] Brodie and Lobel, 21.

the movement was set, there was a distinct order of what things happened when, specific moments of unison existed, and yet each dancer was given agency to make choices on the fly. One section involved a lot of partnering and the dancers interacted with one another differently each time, there was a lot of instantaneous choice and agency involved. It was crucial that each performance of the movement had a "clear intention and initiation," a characteristic which enhances somatic practices.[177] As a group, we explored using internal experience as reference for efficiency in quick decision-making.

Near the premier date, the dancers located themselves in the work, expressing real emotion from an internal experiential place and interaction with one another. As this internal element could change day-to-day, what was performed shifted frequently, creating opportunity for quick decision making. Commitment to choice and trusting their bodies – and one another – was something we worked on a lot as the work developed. If, at any given moment, they second-guessed themselves, the audience did too because who they are and their experiences as dancers was a direct aspect of their performance.

My music choice was intended to encourage riskier improvisational choices from my dancers. The first section began with Hauschka's "Who Lived Here," a slow contemporary orchestral piece of music, setting the scene and hopefully inviting the audience into the world we created. During this section I observed my dancers wanting to be more internal and move with

[177] Wozny, 16.

sustainment. I challenged them to play with transitioning between focusing internal and connecting to one another, while simultaneously going between moving with the music and against it. This first section was a testament to our journey – discovering how to be individual and internal while being aware of our environment and creating a community.

The second section began in silence with a powerful solo in which one dancer invited the others to join her in accelerating into a jazz-inspired world. Though the movement was absolutely derived from the same places and ideas of sensation, Galactic's "Cineramascope" brought jazz-funk into the mix and invited new nuances to the movement. In choosing this song, I invited my dancers to come out of the lull that is often found during somatic practices and enter into full performance. Each dancer certainly approached this differently, yet all consistently moved with more urgency from an inner drive. For me, the softness of the sternum is an indicator of calmness within quickness (as opposed to stressful rushing). More often than not, I pleasantly observed ease in the upper body of each of my dancers and an honest presentation of their experience of joy on stage.

By the end of our process thus far I was seeing significant changes in my dancers, both in the piece and in their classes. During technique class together, I observed my cast members exploring body connectivity and initiating movement from body parts we were working with in rehearsals. On stage I witnessed relationships take form, noticing the dancers seeing one another, dancing together. As each dancer came into her own within the

piece I observed the personalities I have come to know present themselves via smiles, changes in facial expressions and improvisational movement qualities on stage. It was also exciting to watch them shift between inner sensing and projecting experience to the audience. This divide, along with finding the balance between the other polarities throughout the process, was what made this experience rich.

I formulated many of my choreographic prompts as questions, rather than demands; I encouraged self-discovery over giving directions; and I asked my dancers to be true to themselves as performers as I wanted to present them as real people on stage, rather than characters. My intent aimed to encourage their artistic voices to blend with mine, fostering a collaborative work. The application of somatic values allowed for individual investigation while community building. By doing so, the piece was not only set on them, but created through them, incorporating their movement choices and qualitative preferences, ultimately encouraging a greater sense of embodiment. A continual emphasis on openness and body-listening created a non-judgmental environment for creative life, while encouraging self-reflection and a greater kinesthetic awareness within the choreography.

Conclusions

Somatic practices, or mind-body techniques focused on the integration of movement through the connection of the mind and body, are becoming increasingly beneficial within dance practices. We have defined somatic values to integrate into dance practices based on somatic principles including the following: the existence of truths in the body, experiencing sensation, and looking for muscular balance within the body. Our first somatic pillar, scientific knowledge, presents the Western version of the truths in our body. It gives clarity to sensed experience. The second pillar, imagistic language, provides resources to deepen sensation.

Working together, these somatic pillars encourage dancers to deepen awareness and become more full-bodied movers. Somatic values give them the time to slow down, allowing the body to process what is happening.[178] In this way, each can exist in their personal experience, bringing individuality and artistry. Movement efficiency is found by "balancing exertion and recuperation and is imbedded within most somatic techniques and is supported by motor learning research."[179] This efficiency allows for ease, limits overuse of muscles, decreases stress placed on joints, and prevents injury.

The Erick Hawkins Modern Dance Technique trains dancers to move from a place of continual internal sensing, "reawakening perception and

[178] Brodie and Lobel, 26.
[179] Brodie and Lobel, 27.

sensory experience" and "staying alive in the moment of experience."[180] Ideally, this somatic mode of understanding how the body moves through space can be applied across dance genres, allowing today's dancers to be increasingly multi-faceted.

> When dancers move with more sensitivity to what is happening within their bodies and with less concern for the external image, their movement will not only become easier, safer and stronger, it will also afford greater potential for expressiveness.[181]

To me, this alone is reason enough to integrate somatic values into our dance practices. Applying somatic values to dance practices promotes excellence in technique and performance abilities. By moving from sensation, external expression comes more naturally, as it would in day-to-day life.

In order to further inform my personal integration of dance and somatic practices I investigated the dance practices of individuals in the dance world who have already integrated somatic practices into most (if not all) aspects of their lives. These individuals include Erick Hawkins, Eva Karczag and Andrea Olsen. Hawkins, American modern dancer-choreographer, dedicated much of his life creating a modern dance technique based on movement principles. At the time he was applying scientific ideas through imagery and encouraged his dancers to move with ease and efficiency.

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[180] Celichowska, 11.
[181] Brodie and Lobel, 62.

Although Hawkins believed he was focusing on scientific ideas, I believe it was through a lens that today would categorize his modern technique as somatics-based. He also practiced somatic techniques in his daily life, including Ideokinesis, which most likely encouraged his continual use of imagery. Similarly, Eva Karczag, former Trisha Brown Dance Company dancer, developed her own teaching and choreographic styles based on her lifelong journey. Through exposure to cultural and holistic practices, including Alexander Technique and T'ai Chi, she claims that these experiences have shaped her way of moving and her thinking about movement. And finally, Andrea Olsen, who has made the integration of somatics into her life not only a choreographic process, has written several works, including *Body and Earth: An Experiential Guide* and *The Place of Dance: A Somatic Guide to Dancing and Dance Making*. By sharing her experiences around somatic movement practices in written resources, she has opened the dialogue to a broader (dance) audience to interrogate the overlap between movement and somatic values. The professional endeavors of these artists are examples of the always-growing relationship between dance and somatics, and into our lives.

Teaching his students and dancers that "staying alive in the moment of existence was a way of heightening life's experiences," Hawkins urged his students towards enriched lives of full-bodied efficient movement both in and out of the classroom.[182] Throughout his teaching he nurtured not only

[182] Celichowska, 11.

somatic dancers, but somatic individuals, increasing their technical ability and enhancing their quality of dancing, and therefore their living. Although Hawkins began teaching this several decades ago, this process remains in existence. It exists in each dance practice where somatic values are at play.

Karczag notices these same qualities while observing dancers who are able to "soften their surface" and draw audiences "into their depth of physicality, emotion, of thought."[183] Olsen encourages these abilities as she guides her readers through visceral experiences. The experiences ask readers to tap into what communications are occurring in the body, and then relate those to the external environment. In doing so, individuals access the ability to honestly interact with the world on a deeper level, combining the science of the body with the creative practice.[184] Although existing in different times and places, Hawkins, Karczag and Olsen enter(ed) dance practices intending to incite individuals to access the softness and fluidity in their bodies. This intent presented glorious, integrated movers.

No matter the methods, the integration of these somatic values enriches the lives of dancers. Through somatics and the values I have defined, dancers find greater ease of movement, making their seemingly limitless range of motion even more accessible; decrease risk of injury by understanding how the body works individually, not just conceptually; and develop a greater sense of awareness, both internally and externally.

[183] Karczag.
[184] Olsen.

The somatic values I gathered along my journey were built upon ideas presented in dance settings, but they have impacted my daily living with much positivity. And truly, it is the times outside of the studio that allow the times devoted to dance practices become even more enriching. I agree with Hawkins's belief that "what a dancer or choreographer finds technically desirable or aesthetically beautiful is born out of a fundamental philosophy of life."[185] I also believe this directly relates to the application of somatic values in dance practices. If they are your values, you believe in them so strongly that they are a part of you – and that part of you becomes intertwined with all you do. They contribute to wellness in dance; they contribute to wellness in life.

[185] Celichowska, 129.

Appendix A

Categorized Imagery Toolbox[186]

Categories are flexible, often overlapping and supporting one another

Abstract *Non-anatomical*	Nonsensical	Bendy straw, sandbag, paintball splatter, conduit, headlights
	Textural *Can be internal or external textures, often evokes movement qualities*	Thickening of air, scrubbing, pillow-like feet, spilling, pouring, liquid feet, squishy, paintball splatter
	Emotional/Feelings	Giddy/Excitement
	Foods	Piece of pie, cereal box
	Etc.	Spine as a string of pearls
Anatomical *Based on structure of the body and the way parts relate to one another*	Bones	Move from the scapula, pelvis over shoulders (inversion), "SHIPS" – shoulders over hips
	Muscles	Adductors presenting themselves (could also be considered abstract)
	Organs	Breath in upper body, filling the back half of the lungs
	Abstract applications	Tailbone "floats" back
Visual *Actually seeing, not just language*	Demonstration	Other students, teacher, live performance
	Video	
	Photograph	
Person *Well-known to population using image either for movement quality, or a similar "trademark" movement*		Another student, faculty member, Fred Astaire, oompa loompa, Karl Rogers, Jim Hansen
Another Idea/Concept/Technique *Relating a sensation or choreography to another movement practice*	Another dance technique	Limon swing, shuffle off to Buffalo
	Another movement practice	Basketball buoyancy
Complex Combinations *Layering in different ways*	Layered categories to support one another	Visualize ASIS (anatomical) then imagine them as middle eastern countries (abstract)
	Layering images for different body parts	Balloon (working leg) tied to a sandbag (standing leg)

[186] These are not all my images, personally, nor do they belong to any specific individual, as many have been passed down through aural instruction and shared from generation to generation in dance training.

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