

5-2017

# Ballet and Dance/Movement Therapy: Integrating Structure and Expression

Valeria Gómez-Guzmán

Sarah Lawrence College, [vgomez@gm.slc.edu](mailto:vgomez@gm.slc.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.slc.edu/dmt\\_etd](http://digitalcommons.slc.edu/dmt_etd)



Part of the [Dance Movement Therapy Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Gómez-Guzmán, Valeria, "Ballet and Dance/Movement Therapy: Integrating Structure and Expression" (2017). *Dance/Movement Therapy Theses*. 30.

[http://digitalcommons.slc.edu/dmt\\_etd/30](http://digitalcommons.slc.edu/dmt_etd/30)

This Thesis - Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Dance/Movement Therapy Graduate Program at DigitalCommons@SarahLawrence. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dance/Movement Therapy Theses by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@SarahLawrence. For more information, please contact [alester@sarahlawrence.edu](mailto:alester@sarahlawrence.edu).

Ballet and Dance/Movement Therapy:  
Integrating Structure and Expression  
Valeria Gómez-Guzmán

Submitted in partial completion of the  
Master of Science Degree at Sarah Lawrence College  
May 2017

**Table of Contents**

Abstract.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	5
The Rise of Modern Dance.....	6
Isadora Duncan.....	8
Mary Wigman.....	11
Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn: Denishawn.....	12
Martha Graham.....	14
Dance/Movement Therapy Emerges From Modern Dance.....	14
Marian Chace.....	16
Mary Starks Whitehouse.....	17
Trudi Schoop.....	20
Dance Therapy.....	20
Discussion.....	21
Alignment.....	22
Breath and Balance.....	25
Body Awareness.....	27
Structure and Organization Through Discipline.....	28
Connecting the Body and Mind.....	31
Postural Change.....	31
Spatial Awareness.....	36
Structure and Organization.....	37
Body Awareness.....	39

Conclusion.....40

References.....42

**Abstract**

Classical Ballet is an ancient style of dance that was born in 16<sup>th</sup> century and was one of the principal forms of dance for years. Ballet dancers move according to what they are taught, following precise directives and form. Dancers that noticed the missing elements that ballet did not offer began exploring their bodies in more primitive and organic movements that were driven by inner emotions. This style of dance is known as modern dance, and is considered one of the bases of dance/movement therapy. Modern dancers and dance/movement therapists rejected ballet and its form, due to its structural precision and exclusion of free expression through movements. There are many elements within the structure of ballet that might have therapeutic aspects. There are many ways in which ballet can be a part of what dance/movement therapists do, as well as expand on what we do. Dance/movement therapists can explore balletic elements such as posture, alignment, structure, and body awareness in their sessions, with the purpose of deepening the practice.

Keywords: Ballet, Modern Dance, Dance/Movement Therapy, Structure, Alignment,

Body Awareness

### **Acknowledgements**

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor, Elise Risher. The door to her office was always open, and she was willing to answer any questions or help with any trouble areas I faced. Prof. Risher's support was unconditional, and she continuously steered me in the right direction while still allowing the paper to be my own work.

I would also like to thank my professors Susan Orkand and Erin Humbaugh, who encouraged my work and showed support throughout my journey. I appreciated all their insightful comments and the continuous motivation.

I express my warm thanks to all my peers and staff at Sarah Lawrence College. I am sincerely appreciative to them for all their genuine and illuminating opinions on any issues related to my thesis.

I am grateful for my amazing boyfriend and friends and their absolute love and encouragement. I thank them for always making time for me, for answering every question I had, and for being by my side every step of the way.

Finally, I want to express my very profound gratitude to my parents for providing me with unfailing support. Throughout my two years, they have done nothing but continuously encourage me through this process. This achievement would not have been possible without them. Thank you.

### **The Rise of Modern Dance**

Ballet, an intricate, formalized style of dance, originally developed in the French royal courts (Anderson, 1986). In the 16th and 17th centuries, French noblemen with no training would perform lengthy dances, lead by the king or queen, in lavish court spectacles (Au & Rutter, 1988). It was a form of entertainment for people from higher social classes, which slowly developed into a movement style following particular movements and phrases. As the form developed over subsequent centuries, becoming a ballet dancer required a strict regimen of training to perfect the form and look flawless and in unison on stage. Ballet became a style based on the technicalities of specific movements created with the whole body. Ballet dancers were instructed to project fantastical images and characters on stage, with the purpose of entertaining the audiences through elegance, grace, and precision (Anderson, 1986).

Even though it became a well known and well respected form of dance, dancers began losing interest for this style in the late 19th century due to the belief that there was no space for free expression in ballet dance (Levy, 1988). Ballet dancers were realizing that ballet displayed a technical style and lacked the emotional component expressed through other forms of art, such as music and painting. Ballet required discipline, hours of practice, a specific body type, and many other particularities that made the ballet community limited and exclusive. Ballet created a mystical image of women and men and included fantastical themes, not pertaining to any feelings or emotions society was experiencing at the moment.

After the 19th century American civil war, women began to realize they had little to no role in society (Cass, 1993). Gender roles favored men, and women were only to be seen as delicate, calm, and graceful. Ballet dance accentuated the stereotypes confining women to

the rules created by society. Women were confined to the stereotypes defining them, and had limited outlets for expressing their capabilities, strength, and power. After the war, women began to realize their potential, which led them to finding an outlet through which they could silently protest while at the same time demonstrate their capacity.

This awareness opened the doors for other dance styles to emerge into the world of art, one of them being modern dance (Levy, 1988). The group of dancers who transformed the art did not only have the intention of innovating and refreshing dance, but also of creating a dance form that allowed for freedom of expression. By expressing and representing the new woman: a strong, independent, self-sufficient, and physically daring being, the forerunners used their feelings, emotions, and strengths to create a new authentic style of movement (Cass, 1993). The idea was to deemphasize the notion of performing for audiences in a structured form, and, instead, to perform for the self. Through this, modern dance exposed the American ideal of non-conformity and democracy. Through the use of dance, American women and men had the opportunity to show what freedom of expression is (Anderson, 1988).

In America, Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis were among a group of women were the at the forefront of this new, modern dance. Modern dance pioneers found ballet a restricting form, one where there was no space for free expression within the style. Modern dance began forming in countries like America and Germany, where ballet companies were not as successful because of the restraints it held, and where other changes were occurring in other art forms, such as painting (Cass, 1993). It became not one particular technique, but a point of view that allowed artists to show who they were through individualistic choreographies with unique movements and themes developed through personal emotions



(Anderson, 1986).

Modern dance pioneers sought to create an outlet for expression through the use of the body. Through movement, dancers began to express their feelings about society and their personal conflicts. Women had an opportunity to show their strength and power through the art of dance, rather than the mystical and delicate side shown in ballet. Dancers imposed on themselves a freedom in which they could move however they felt, without any restrictions, in contrast to the limits applied in ballet. The pioneers began creating individualistic work, revolting from classical dance and declaring their artistic freedom (Anderson, 1986). Combined with the use of movement as a free expression, some pioneers began to integrate psychological principles into their choreography, connecting the body and mind through their dances. Others explored the use of the body freely, in accordance to their emotions, with the purpose of creating unique and expressive movements (Levy, 1988).

### **Isadora Duncan**

During the nineteenth century, American modern dance pioneer Isadora Duncan broke boundaries in the performance world. Duncan was a modern dancer who revolutionized the way the world sees dance by removing the ballet slippers from her feet and dancing barefoot. (Copeland & Cohen, 1983). Duncan argued that ballet's movements are not natural; they go against the gravitational laws and natural drive of the individual, and that the movements die after they are made (Copeland & Cohen, 1983). Because of the restrictions ballet dance has, the movements are always executed in the same form, not allowing subsequent movement improvisation, therefore the movement "dies". To Duncan, the movement "dying" refers to the movement ending: the movement can't shift or grow any further in ballet because they were designed to be performed in a precise manner and not

designed for further exploration.

Isadora Duncan is seen as one of the first to break from the stylized form of ballet with the purpose of finding natural movements that connect the individual to external forces affecting them. These forces include emotional conflicts, personal life experiences, and societal problems, among others. Through experimenting with her body and connecting movement to her feelings and beliefs, Duncan did not allow movement to die after being performed, but rather she revitalized the use of movement. She saw natural movement as a response to these external forces, and viewed dance as a way of making humans whole (Bernstein, 1994). According to Duncan, ballet is stylized and it focuses on creating an illusion, one where the audience believes gravity does not exist for the dancer. Therefore, the movements could not be explored further than the style allowed for (Copeland & Cohen, 1983). However, through her own explorations, she realized how much movement had to offer to the world of dance.

During her childhood, Duncan trained in ballet technique and was also part of a theatre company, but ultimately discovered that dance as a form of entertainment wasn't her passion (Au & Rutter, 2002). She explored free flowing, natural movements of the body. She performed and understood her body as, "the dancing body, the natural body, the expressive body, and the female body" (Daly, 1993). Duncan's different bodies shared movement. She believed dance should be a mental and spiritual expression of a human being through the body's movement (Daly, 1993). To connect her different bodies, she presented new qualities of movement that included being rooted to the ground, uplifted, and strong. Isadora wanted to oppose the aristocratic style of ballet, therefore she created a revolutionary style, breaking all the rules behind the essence of modernism (Cass, 1993).

Duncan also questioned the body alignment of the dancer in ballet. She wrote that the woman's body is not done justice when dancing ballet, because of what she described as its unrealistic movement qualities. Since the body is moved in ways that are not natural to the women's anatomy, she saw the movements as non-authentic. There is a sense of feminism and frustration behind her ideas that caused her to revolutionize the style of ballet in order for her to find a more "natural" one where women could express authentic feminine movements (Copeland & Cohen, 1983).

Isadora Duncan was highly influenced by Francois Delsarte, a French Opera singer who lost his voice and subsequently dedicated his life to researching natural expressive gestures artists could use in the theater, instead of what he described as the "shallow" movements used at the time (Levy, 1988). Just like Delsarte, Duncan worked towards removing the superficial body movements that did not connect the dancer with their inner self and found a connection between moving authentically and inner emotions. Francois Delsarte became a big influence on Duncan because of his interest in everyday movements, such as walking. He connected the whole body, the head as the intellectual component, the torso as the emotional component, and the legs as the physical component (Cass, 1993). His observations allowed for the creation of theories linking people's unconscious, emotional, and expressive movements with their behaviors. Delsarte envisioned a technique that opened a path for dancers such as Isadora Duncan, who explored Greek use of gesture in order to create an innovative dance language (Levy, 1988).

Duncan characterized the body's movements as, "the natural, the universal, the timeless, and the god-given" (Daly, 1993). These words transformed how movement was seen and her work is still seen as groundbreaking today. Duncan emphasized the connection

between the body and mind and how movement within oneself can achieve this. She not only pushed limits and broke boundaries in her movement techniques, but also created a path for other artists who would follow after her (Daly, 1993).

### **Mary Wigman**

Similar to Isadora Duncan in America, Mary Wigman introduced the style in Germany and held the German character of modern dance (Cass, 1993). She had a similar passion for reclaiming human movement with the idea of creating dance from emotional and artistic impulses. However, Wigman was different than Duncan in her style: Duncan played with Greek ideas of gesture, her dances were upbeat, light, and graceful. Wigman's works were darker: she was interested in the primitive human energies as well as the use of heavy imagery, such as death and war as well as other topics reflecting the darker side of history and human existence. Her movements were rooted and grounded, making her dances mysterious (Cass, 1993). Wigman explored primal movements, which connected her to her primitive and animalistic self. She was revolutionary because of her use of aboriginal human drives in an era where people were already perceived as sophisticated (Anderson, 1986).

Mary Wigman's dances were different from everything being explored in America, both in modern dance and ballet. Her works were called "a far cry from La Sylphide", one of the most well known balletic productions of the time (Au & Rutter, 1988, p. 98). Her choreographies were opposite to everything ballet offered, from themes, to shapes and movements. She studied from Rudolf Laban, a theorist who also rejected ballet and advocated using human body movements freely, reflecting conventional activities and everyday movements (Anderson, 1986).

Mary Wigman learned how to free her suppressed emotions through her dances,

reporting even being afraid at times of the emotions she was releasing in her choreographies (Anderson, 1986). She resorted to the idea of wearing masks while dancing, in order to fully immerse herself in her emotional experience. The mask created a wall between the audience and the dancer, where the dancer could feel the choreography and movements on an emotional level, while depersonalizing the movement experience the spectators could have by watching. Wearing a depersonalizing mask allowed Wigman to connect with her body and mind on a deeper level, while having unleash her emotions through movements without the help of facial expressions (Anderson, 1986).

### **Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn: Denishawn**

Just like Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis trained in the Delsarte technique. An American dancer, St. Denis researched Eastern cultures with the purpose of finding the spiritual aspects behind the art of dance. Along with Ted Shawn, they opened the Denishawn School of Dance in Los Angeles, California where some of the pupils were well known modern dancers and dance therapists: Martha Graham, Marian Chace, Charles Weidman, and Doris Humphrey, among them. This school was revolutionary in the sense that even the ballet technique taught was modernized, transforming ballet into an emotional experience (Cass, 1993).

When she was young, St. Denis learned about ballet, ballroom dance, and the Delsarte technique. However, she did not focus on one technique, but was rather loosely trained in all three (Cass, 1993). Later, in the early 1900s, before finding her own style of dance, St. Denis began her career in the theater performing the more conventional categories, such as acrobatics and skirt dancing, with training in ballet and Spanish dancing. The inspiration to focus on cultural dances came from a poster advertising cigarettes called

Egyptian Deities, which had a picture of an Egyptian goddess photographed on it. This prompted St. Denis to immerse herself in other cultures, particularly Eastern and Oriental. She incorporated the ritualistic element behind every cultural dance as well as the dancer's five senses, creating a well-rounded style of dance and contrasting the previous styles explored in the Romantic era. Her choreography was stylized yet authentic, and attracted the attention and fascination of many women of society. Just like Isadora Duncan, Denis won the admiration of many European artists as well (Anderson, 1986; Au & Rutter, 1988).

Meeting Ted Shawn was an important turning point in her career, since he shared the same belief about incorporating the religious and spiritual aspect of dance into daily human life (Au & Rutter, 1988). Shawn began his career in ballroom dancing, after being sick with diphtheria and becoming paralyzed. Using dance as his form of physical therapy, Ted Shawn learned about dance and decided to dedicate his life to the art form. Their meeting was a crucial event for the future of modern dance because of their mutual appreciation of dance as an emotional and spiritual experience. They became partners quickly, and later married, creating the school of Denishawn and giving birth to many of the greatest modern dance and dance therapy pioneers today (Anderson, 1986).

Neither Shawn nor St. Denis had extensive training in technical dance, therefore their school offered only a basic level of ballet classes.. Most of the classes offered were on cultural dances, such as Oriental dance, American Indian dance, and any other dance style they were interested in. The school was eclectic and diverse in its particular learning styles as well as its choreographies. According to St. Denis, dancing was a spiritual experience, with its purpose and main goal being making mankind better (Anderson, 1986). She felt a dancer could reach this spirituality by allowing him or herself to reach the highest point of

expression, without repetition, but through a slow unfolding of raw and expressive movement. This expressive movement could be found in a technique class, like ballet, but through movement in many other styles of dance in order to find the truer self (Anderson, 1986).

### **Martha Graham**

Martha Graham did not begin her dancing career until she was 20 years old. When her family moved to California, Graham attended a Ruth St. Denis concert, and, three years later, she enrolled in the Denishawn School. Without any prior dance training, Graham became one of Ted Shawn's favorite dancers; he saw a "flaming inner intensity in every movement Martha made" (Cass, 1993). Graham quickly became a star in the company, however, because of her late entrance into the dance world, Martha Graham did not have a detailed instruction in technical dance styles (Cass, 1993). She was introduced to the Denishawn technique of cultural dances, where spiritual and personal experience through dance was the foundation for the particular dance style (Anderson, 1986).

Graham was a performer and a teacher at the Denishawn School, but she was only allowed to teach St. Denis and Shawn's performance style (Cass, 1993). She became a professor and a performer, but she did not feel any emotional connection to the movements she was both teaching and presenting (Cass, 1993). After some time as a teacher, Martha Graham created a devoted dance aesthetic for students, which was at times both physically and emotionally painful. Graham began creating movement with a connection to her own emotions and inner conflicts (Cass, 1993).

When living in New York City, Graham choreographed more than 200 dances (Cass, 1993). Her style of dance was "unballetic as possible:" there was no turnout, movements

were supported on bare feet, and feet were flexed instead of extended at the ankle (Cass, 1993). Movements were strong, sharp, and close to the floor, instead of light and free, like in ballet. Even the costumes and themes she chose were opposite to those in ballet: she would create costumes on heavy, long, and dark-colored fabrics. She introduced strong topics such as that of resurrection and immigration into her choreographies. At one point in her career, she was invited to perform a ballet dance choreographed by Leonide Massine, who wanted her to dance like she had never danced before: with precise, graceful movement sequences (Cass, 1993). Graham's experience of training with and performing for Massine, influenced one of her first great choreographies, known as *Primitive Mysteries* (Cass, 1993).

Graham's abilities came to fruition at a time when modern dance was primarily feminine-based, both expressively and emotionally (Cass, 1993). She broke down the wall containing emotions people were not expressing in the early 1900s, and gave light to these feelings by making them her choreographic themes. These included anger, jealousy, sexual attraction, the need for approval, as well as other suppressed feelings. She researched theologians, psychologists, philosophers, and poets from both Eastern and Western regions, such as Carl Jung, Hindu philosophers, and Christian Agnostics, with the purpose of consuming information from all cultures surrounding her and creating a new technique of dance that included all of these elements (Cass, 1993). Her dances were enriched by all of this information she wanted to offer to the world through movement. Her technique reflected internal psychological conflict, emphasizing the torso as the "emotional center," (Cass, 1993, p. 264) and moving to unusual phrases of percussive rhythms, while twisting the body into eccentric shapes (Cass, 1993). Graham created her exercises with the purpose of having dancers move to her personal style. The movements held a foundation of inner psychological



conflicts and a dramatic edge (Cass, 1993).

### **Dance/Movement Therapy Emerges from Modern Dance**

Because of this exploration between modern dance and the mind, modern dancers began finding that there was more to be explored through movement. Dance/movement therapy developed because the interest in using movement as a form of expression began to expand from dancers, to non-dancers. Modern dancers were experimenting with the non-verbal form of communication found in dance, and were realizing that many types of movement can be part of a therapeutic experience, not only the professional.

### **Marian Chace**

Marian Chace, considered a pioneer of dance/movement therapy, began her dance career as a student of St. Denis and Ted Shawn (Levy, 1988). Chace learned many styles of dance in the Denishawn School, including a modified version of ballet. Technical dances such as ballet and contemporary modern were taught with a focus on folk dance. The idea behind teaching dance styles that were more rigid than the expressive folk dances was to expand the students' movement repertoire, which gave her, as a dancer more, options when developing improvisational movement. She was strictly a performer before becoming a teacher and later a dance therapist (Levy, 1988).

Chace worked by modifying movement for the benefit of the choreography and the audience's reactions. When she founded her own Denishawn school in Washington D.C. and began observing movement on other individuals, she understood that there was more to dance than the performative aspects learned through the technical dance classes (Chaiklin, Chace, Sandel, Lohn, 1993). Over time, she noticed how many dancers in her school were lacking the performative attributes of ballet in their technique, but were attending her school

for another purpose (Levy, 1988). Even though they had difficulties learning, they were as dedicated as the other students, and she began learning how to empathize with them. She realized that students found satisfaction in movement in various ways, which was a breaking point for her as a teacher and eventually led her to be intrigued with non-verbal communication (Levy, 1988).

Realizing that there is more to movement than just performing, Chace began working with other types of clients, such as rejected children, servicemen at The Red Cross, and at a psychiatric facility known as St. Elizabeth's Hospital (Chaiklin, 1993). Chace saw dance as a method of communication that had the ability to fulfill human's needs (Levy, 1988). She contributed to the field by developing its theories and discussing the differences between expressive therapy through dance and performative dancing.

Chace observed that some of the patients she had worked with benefitted from improvisational and creative dance, rather than technical dance. From her perspective, ballet required significant amounts of planning, organizing, and structuring when choreographing. She argued, though, that ballet does have an emotional component when being performed for an audience; there is an original intention being presented, but this is overshadowed by all the improvements made to the choreography throughout the process. Because the movements are shifted with the purpose of pleasing the audience, the dancer becomes another prop on stage, detaching him or herself from their emotions (Chaiklin, et. al, 1993).

### **Mary Starks Whitehouse**

Dance movement therapy pioneer Mary Whitehouse was another great influence on dancers and dance therapists during the mid twentieth century. In the 1950's she worked with

dance students in her personal studio and understood that there was a difference in her teachings compared to other professionals in the field. In her early discoveries, Whitehouse realized she had very little interest in presentational concert dance but, rather, longed for something deeper. She became a dance therapist without knowing, “simply because no such thing existed when I started” (Levy, 1988). Even though Whitehouse studied under Martha Graham at a young age, her greatest influence was at the Mary Wigman School in Dresden, Germany, where she studied the exploration of improvisation, focusing on how creative people move, with a foundation on Jung’s psychoanalytic theories. (Levy, 1988).

Whitehouse researched psychoanalytic theorist Carl Jung’s principles about the unconscious (Levy, 1988). She greatly appreciated the notion that movement is expressive and allows for freedom of the body mentally and physically. Because she was able to experience Jungian analytic psychotherapy, Whitehouse analyzed her own movements by bringing awareness to the meaning behind her movement, and strongly believed that dance is a form of nonverbal communication and self expression (Levy, 1988). She found inspiration in Wigman and Jung and created her own technique, which resulted in the development of her written theoretical and practical approach to dance and movement therapy. Her practice is known as Authentic Movement and has evolved and flourished during the years, providing an approach for elevating the connection between the mind and body through psychotherapy, meditation and imagery (Levy, 1988).

Authentic Movement is a therapeutic experience that allows people to explore the relationship between the imaginative and psychological thoughts of the physical self (Levy, 1988). Whitehouse’s classes were structured according to the client’s willingness and needs, with the purpose of creating a trusting relationship with the client. “Whitehouse emphasized

the importance of the quality of the therapeutic relationship, without which, she believed, the therapeutic movement process would not unfold” (Levy, 1988). It was important for her to create relationships secured with trust to the individual or group. Once trust was established, the individual would be able to open up and potentially reach a deeper healing transformation that could bring an improved sense of meaning to daily life (Levy, 1988).

Whitehouse taught people how to release unconscious emotions that lived inside of their bodies as well bring awareness to unconscious feelings that often go unrecognized.(Levy, 1988). Whitehouse strongly believed that with support, unconscious emotions can be deeply explored. To achieve a sense of wholeness, Whitehouse eventually led her clients to improvisational work, where they had a sense of freedom to express themselves creatively and imaginatively. Using improvisational work, she pushed her dancers to loosen and relax repressed feelings to reawaken their bodies and minds (Levy, 1988).

At Mary Wigman’s school in Germany, Whitehouse learned mainly about improvisation (Pallaro, 1999). However, she was taught to respect every dancer’s own material, or movement repertoire. She moved to America in a time where there was a conflict about how much weight should be given to both ballet and improvisation. Dancers were conflicted about which dance style they should give more importance to: a structured style or a free dance form where they could move and feel as desired (Pallaro, 1999). Because of this conflict, Mary Whitehouse learned that the active imagination has little to do with the particular areas involved in the movement, but rather the felt experience caused by such dance. She believed that the use of technique could become useful as a foundation, only with the purpose of allowing the dancer to repeat and recreate the particular movements they are

expressing (Pallaro, 1999).

### **Trudi Schoop**

Trudi Schoop is another pioneer of Dance Movement Therapy in the West Coast who had a background in mime (Levy, 1988). She began her career with classical ballet training, as many other pioneers did, after she felt that she needed some technical training in dance. She wanted ballet to teach her how to move like a dancer to later use her body as an instrument when miming and performing. She did not enjoy dancing ballet, yet she her purpose was to build her repertory of movements (Wallock, 1983).

Schoop, however, did not encourage the ballet style in her teaching because of what she described as its depersonalizing aspect (Wallock, 1983). She believed that standing in a classroom with a teacher staring at young pupils, teaching a style, does not allow self-expression through movement. According to Schoop, the body can and should express itself, which is why dancers should train in modern dance and other types of movements, excluding ballet (Wallock, 1983). Trudi Schoop also encouraged dance therapists to explore different movement styles, such as ballet, modern dance, and even martial arts. Expanding the movement range gives the dance therapist an opportunity to refine which styles of movements he or she prefers and will use in sessions (Wallock, 1983).

### **Dance Therapy**

Most, if not all dance therapists have significant dance background. Many dancers have practiced the art of ballet at some point in their dancing career. Since dance/movement therapists should include every dance style learned into their toolbox of knowledge, aspects of ballet should be included in their therapeutic experience when working with clients. Over the years, dance/movement therapists have expressed their hesitations towards ballet. Yet

because many of them have an extensive background in dance, ballet seems to be part of their base learning. Their reluctances toward ballet counteract their technical background, which questions the notion of why this aspect of their base is ignored in their work as dance therapists.

According to dance/movement therapists, ballet should not be used in sessions as a method of free expression. Dance/movement therapy avoids the use of ballet because of its structure and its inability to allow free expression of the individual's inner drives and emotions. The linear movements from classical ballet are viewed as not authentic, coming from a place of aesthetic and beauty. Ballet, according to them, abounds in structure and style, prohibiting the exploration of inner drives through movement. However, most of the elements that dance/movement therapists reject about ballet contain some aspects that are used or might serve as useful if integrated into session. It is important to revisit the key elements of ballet in order to understand the benefits they might hold and how to introduce them in a dance therapy session.

### **Discussion**

Despite a common background in ballet, many dance/movement therapy pioneers rejected its use in their therapeutic practice. They believed ballet was restricting; it depicted the woman stereotypically, and lacked authenticity in movement. Ballet lacked the emotional component, the improvisational aspect, and free expression. Modern dancers and dance/movement therapists left behind ballet because of the restrictions and limitations it held. However, there might be some aspects of ballet that might be beneficial in dance/movement therapy sessions. Ballet contains specific elements that might serve as extra tools to dance/movement therapists. It might be beneficial to consider whether ballet may be

useful in therapy, beginning with elements of ballet that might have a therapeutic aspect to them.

### **Alignment**

There are five fundamental positions on which all the other movements in the style of ballet are based. These five positions all have one element in common: the principle of outwardness of the body, known as *turnout* and *en dehors* (Copeland & Cohen, 1983). Although primarily considered foot positions, the execution of the five positions is initiated in the hip socket, causing the leg to turn outward. This “turn out” is the base for everything done in ballet. If not for the turnout, it would not be possible to accomplish the numerous pirouettes, shoulder high extensions, intricate jumps, and other gravity-defying, graceful steps that characterize classical ballet. (Copeland & Cohen, 1983). A sideways shoulder high extension, for example, occurs when locking the hip socket in place, not allowing the pelvis to move, while extending the leg as high as possible. This movement might seem simple, yet requires great flexibility and perfect alignment of the body. The turnout of the body in ballet is very particular and requires long dedicated hours in order to master the alignment of the body.

Alignment refers to the relationship of every individual body segment to one another. In ballet, the hip socket is turned outwards, which rotates the whole leg into the turned out position. In the first of the five positions, the heels are touching while the toes of both feet are facing outwards, in relation to the body. The knees are extended, and their backs are touching, while the front part of the knees is also facing outwards. Once the lower body is in place, the rest of the upper body needs to be shaped accordingly. The pelvis needs to be tucked in in order to keep the spinal cord in place, the torso pulls upwards without causing

the rib cage to open forward, the stomach is tucked in, and the neck is elongated upwards. When a ballet dancer is not “aligned” vertically and correctly, the movement looks wrong, as it doesn’t conform to the classical aesthetic of ballet.

Placement of the weight of the dancer’s body is important to the execution of their movements. Weight shifting is imperative in dancing and works in conjunction to the body’s alignment, in order to create movement precision. However, because ballet dance requires the body to constantly be in motion, the alignment of the body and the placement of weight shifts constantly. The dancer needs to have a strong awareness and foundation of his/her body alignment and placement in order to always preserve the balletic technique.

The alignment of the ballet dancer’s body tends to be vertical, elongated, and thin. The correct alignment of the body will give the dancer true balletic positions and will allow the body to appear as vertical as possible. There are many aspects that contribute to the verticality in dancers, such as pointe work. The more advanced dancers, the ones that have more experience with ballet and have learned how to align their bodies, practice pointe work. Pointe work is done in specific ballet shoes that have a harder “box” in the front of the shoe, made specifically to hold the dancer’s full weight in the small platform created by the box. Dancers need to be more advanced in their ballet training because of the amount of body awareness, proper weight distribution, and alignment required to dance on the tip of their toes. Standing on the tip of their toes enhances the illusion of ballet dancer’s legs being long and their bodies looking particularly vertical.

Jumps and leaps in ballet dance illustrate the idea of verticality by creating an extension through which the dancer lifts upwards. By jumping upwards, the dancer elongates, particularly in the jumps known as *petite allegro*. Petite allegro exercises are



known as the “small jumps”, where the dancer leaps quickly across the floor. These leaps represent the concept of lightness in ballet, primarily caused by the illusion of verticality seen in the dancer’s alignment and position. The leaps are small: the toes barely lift off the floor, the feet are pointed, and the legs are extended, causing the dancer’s legs to look longer than they are.

Partner work also creates the illusion of verticality, specifically when doing lifts. The male dancer, when seen from the audience, seems as if he is lifting the female dancer by pure strength, without any help from her. However, there is a precise technique behind the art of partner dancing, one that involves the strength, momentum, balance, and alignment of both parties equally. Once the ballerina is up in the air, above the male dancer, the position might be held, the male dancer might walk around with the ballerina holding the position, or he might simply bring her down slowly, showing precision and stability. When in the air, both dancers are reaching upwards: the male dancer holding the female dancer, and the female dancer aiding the male dancer by equally distributing her weight. From an audience point of view, the dancers create an even longer line than the one they usually create by themselves.

Volynksy, a literary classical journalist, believed this verticality began with the history of human culture, as it connects heaven and earth, with the ballerinas reaching upwards towards the gods (Copeland & Cohen, 1983). This gives symbolism to the work of classical ballet, connecting the body with spirituality through imagery. Dancing has existed since ancient times, where ritualistic styles of dances were spiritual and primitive. Even though ballet evolved many centuries after, incorporating the idea of spirituality in ballet allows for the use of symbolism, giving the dancer a greater purpose when executing ballet’s fixed movements.

Reaching the perfect alignment through verticality leads to the lightness observed when a ballet dancer is performing. Lightness and verticality work together in order to create a gravity-defying illusion. To give this illusion of lightness, classical ballet dancers need to engage with their verticality and weight positioning. This also relates to where they place the center of gravity in their bodies (Copeland & Cohen, 1983). Lightness with a sense of clarity makes the movements seem effortless and graceful. Ballet dancers are given a particular image to achieve alignment, verticality, and lightness properly: to imagine a string pulling them upwards from the center of their heads. This image has the purpose of forcing the dancer to take weight away from the lower body, giving the legs more lightness when moving across the space. Through the use of imagery, the dancer is able to achieve balletic perfection.

The alignment of the body in ballet is very particular and precise, not leaving room for improvisation. Ballet provides a movement structure, where the dancer can move according to the guidelines provided in the style. The dancer does not have room to improvise because of the rigidity in the dance, however, ballet dancers benefit from the structure behind alignment because of the strong connection they build between their body and mind through body awareness.

### **Breath and Balance**

Balance is one of the most important characteristics when learning ballet. Balance is the key to performing pirouettes, holding poses on one foot for long periods of time, and it is the most important aspect of pointe work. Pirouettes are turns performed on the ball of one foot; this part of the foot is holding the weight of the whole body while the dancer turns many times in a row. Since ballet classes are sequential, beginning dancers might be told to

try and balance on one foot, or even try to balance by walking on a straight line, one foot in front of the other. Later, balance might be done on the balls of both feet and, after that, one foot with support. More advanced dancers practice balancing in the center of the room, without support, and might perform more difficult exercises such as turns.

Breath is often forgotten in ballet, as there are so many other aspects of the body that the dancer needs to be aware of. However, breath is a point of focus when trying to accomplish the right balance. Dancers are often told to “remember to breathe”, because holding their breath might not only leave the dancer short of breath, but it might also create an imbalance of weight in the body. The ballet dancer might hold their breath because he/she is focusing on being aware of their proper alignment and the execution of movements, which requires vast amounts of attention, leaving the breath to be forgotten. By holding their breath, dancers lose their balance and their center focus. Breathing naturally will allow dancers to look flawless, lighter, and more graceful, whereas holding their breath will cause the dancer to lose balance and fall from it. Breath support re-centers the dancer and allows the movements to flow freely. When supported by breath, the ballet dancer has a strong center of balance, which in turn supports the dancer’s movements by allowing the movements to look more natural and “easy” to the audience.

Balance and breath are two vital elements in the art of ballet which work together. At times, dancers are directed to explore balance with their eyes closed. This form of balance requires extensive proprioception, meaning that the dancer needs to be completely aware of his/her body, and it also requires the dancer to breathe naturally and not hold their breath. Proprioception refers to the unconscious awareness of movement in one’s own body. Having total awareness of the alignment, balance, and breath gives the dancer the

necessary tools needed for balancing with eyes closed.

### **Body Awareness**

A ballet class does not only require the teaching of the technique, but the dancer creates a commitment to the shape of ballet, one where, after lengthy hours of practice, it becomes an unconscious experience (Kleiner, 2009). Learning ballet is about commitment, both structurally and when performing/dancing. Because of the rigidity in the movement, the dancer needs to concentrate and engage in the art of ballet fully in order to advance and become an expert. However, in order to achieve this, the dancers need to be consciously aware of their bodies. With time, the movements the ballet dancer has learned will become automatic because of the extensive awareness and focus given to the body. The body creates muscle memory, and automatically and unconsciously executes movements. Muscle memory refers to what happens to the body when a movement is repeated enough times to allow the person to replicate the movement without conscious thought.

Performing in front of the audience is the last step, where the focus is off the coordination of movement and onto the expression and execution of it. Because of the many times he/she practiced the same movement sequence, dancers generate muscle memory and perform unconsciously. This is true about the dancer that has had vast training in ballet and doesn't need to consciously think about his/her body alignment and movement precision when performing. Though this might be true for any dance technique, it is important to note the unconscious execution of movement when performing a choreographed piece to further understand how aware ballet dancers are of their body.

Because ballet focuses on performance, the dancer focuses on the same movements learned in class, organized in a different sequence. Barre exercises in ballet, for example,

force the dancer to connect their body and mind through body awareness, with the purpose of improving the technique through repetition. The ballet class has a particular structure where the dancer learns new exercises and revisits combinations with the purpose of creating a better and stronger dancer, according to ballet standards.

### **Structure and Organization through Discipline**

Classical ballet is a structured technique, precisely organized in both the movement styles and the way the class is designed. The typical ballet class has a particular sequence and structure, one the dancer memorizes after many classes. The class' structure becomes a habit, which creates organization, cohesion, and increases focus in the dancers in class. The dancer comes into the space knowing where to go and what to expect. The ballet teacher builds this environment through discipline. The leadership style is strict and tough, which creates a setting of equal respect. Respect builds trust, and trusting the teacher will allow the dancer to believe in their corrections and teaching style in order to achieve their main goal.

The teacher's main goal is to provide the student with the necessary tools to make them the best dancers they can be. This is usually done through repetition and correction, because of the desire to be better. By setting boundaries and rules from the beginning, the class becomes disciplined, creating an organized environment where the main goals are to train and become a better dancer. Becoming a better dancer can only be achieved through the sequence a ballet class follows as well as extensive hours of discipline and practice. Part of the formality of ballet class is the dress code: black leotard, pink tights, ballet slippers, and hair in a specific bun; this creates formality, as well as the appearance of equality. All aspects of a ballet class are part of the ballet etiquette, including the structure of every class.

A class usually begins with barre exercises. The barre is a rail, usually metallic or wooden and attached to the wall, in which the dancer warms up his/her body through a sequence of exercises. Barre combinations allow the dancer to work with his/her alignment, balance, weight shifts and placement, as well as prepare for the center exercises. After barre exercises are finished, the dancers move to the center of the room to perform a new series of exercises, and then they move diagonally from one side of the room to another. Sometimes, teachers will have the students practice barre combinations in the center, to practice balance and polish the technique. The ballet class ends with a “reverence”, where the dancers curtsy to the musician and the teacher, as a form of gratitude. Before leaving the studio, dancers are encouraged to cool down before exiting the classroom, allowing the body and mind to unwind and gain balance.

The barre combinations start small and slow, warming up the body. As the class moves along, exercises become more complex. After the barre, there is a sequence of center exercises. These tend to begin with a series of slow exercises, called adagio, that use strength and flexibility. The adagio exercises also tend to work with port de bras and leg extensions and balances. Port de bras are graceful arm movements and poses, sometimes involving a bend. Adagios are followed by faster exercises, called allegro, which are quicker and require the element of lightness, in order to be able to execute them correctly. The faster combinations usually incorporate hops and jumps also pertaining to the ballet technique. The ballet barre sequence differs depending on the ballet technique the teacher follows, but the exercises tend to be the same, universally. However, there are those master ballet teachers who have made changes to how ballet is taught, such as Antony Tudor.

Antony Tudor was a ballet choreographer who reformed ballet teaching and its

perception. He created numerous ballets, and his rehearsal process was different than the stylized, monotonous structure of a typical ballet rehearsal. Tudor used “ballet’s silent language as a means of understanding characters and the deeper realities of human relationships” (Chazin-Bennahum, 1994). When directing a performance, Tudor would study the characters in order to understand their true emotions. He did this in order to lead the dancers into finding those emotions in their own bodies and through their personal experiences. The productions would then be more authentic, because the performance was more natural and organic. Anthony Tudor studied different techniques as well as ballet to encompass a full production, where the audience could connect with the dancers and vice versa.

When rehearsing with his dancers, Tudor wanted them to feel the movement in their bodies as a physical experience, one where the movement was extremely sensory and almost sensual. His work was known as “psychological ballet”, and he described himself as a teacher, one who opens hearts and minds (Chazin-Bennahum, 1994). Ballet was not just about the classic style that has been passed down for hundreds of generations; to Tudor, ballet also was about connecting emotionally to the movement being performed. Tudor used to provoke his dancers’ imaginations, with the purpose of allowing them to feel movement in their bodies.

Tudor gave ballet a meaning and a purpose, as well as a point of initiation. He analyzed dances in order to make the experience about the music, the dance, and the story behind them, rather than the stylized ballet choreographies previously seen. He connected the mind and body of his dancers with the purpose of emotionally engaging them with the choreography, in a way that would create a candid performance, rather than a mechanized

routine. Tudor connected the ideas behind modern dance with the style of ballet, primarily the use of emotional expression through the use of the body. He found ways in which he could connect the body and mind, even within the structure of ballet. Through the stylized form of ballet, he found a psychological and therapeutic aspect, and applied it in his rehearsals to make the experience more meaningful and personal for each dancer. Tudor implemented personal explorations into the structure of his ballet classes and rehearsals, and ballet became a style that can connect movement to emotion, on a deeper level. Ballet should be revisited through the lens of dance/movement therapy, with the purpose of finding other elements of ballet that can be therapeutic.

### **Connecting the Body and Mind**

Dance/movement therapists work with connecting the body and mind. Although dance/movement therapy goals vary according to the needs of different populations, goals include socialization, emotion regulation, awareness, self-agency, stress management, and relaxation skills. The dance therapist needs to meet the patient where they are emotionally, physically, and psychologically, and begin the group from this state. Balletic elements can be used in session with the purpose of enhancing this striking balance between meeting the patient where they are and introducing structure without inhibiting creativity. The next section will discuss how ballet could be incorporated into treatment, using dance/movement therapy goals in conjunction to balletic elements.

### **Postural Change**

According to Elaine Siegel (1984), dance/movement therapists without a past in classical ballet try to move as organically as possible, meaning authentically and not stylized as in ballet. These dance therapists avoid the linear movements that are, in fact, a big part of



the movements in Western culture, because of the negative connotations that balletic linear movements have in dance/movement therapy (Siegel, 1984). Dance therapists should include linear movements in the sessions, not only because of the cultural aspects, but because of the external structure it can provide to the patients, where personal experimentation can occur afterwards (Seigel, 1984). The linear movements can create awareness of the space surrounding the patient, as well as becoming aware of their own body.

Aligning the body for a dance/movement therapy participant means becoming aware of it. Playing with postures and different ways of aligning connects the patient to his/her own body, creating awareness of it. Through postural changes, the patient becomes aware of the body because of the exploration of what might feel right and wrong. This can be enhanced through the use of imagery or the patient's own creativity. For example, the dance therapist might introduce the same imagery ballet dancers use, of the string pulling the patient upwards from the center of the head. This imagery can be explored as many other variations, such as the string pulling from other sides of the body, until finding the perfect alignment. This image can foster the understanding of alignment, body awareness, and body polarities.

The body works with opposites constantly. When performing any movement, at least one muscle contracts and another extends (Chodorow, 1991). So much of what we do in life is relative to the opposite; therefore it is important to explore polarities in movement with patients who might be lacking balance and boundaries in their life. Through the use of alignment, the patient can be able to engage their core, become aware of their body, and create balance through the exploration of polarities. The exercise becomes a teaching moment for the patient: understanding life's dualities and finding a way to balance them.

Participants shift weight through the body with the purpose of exploring how one part of the body might feel stronger and the other lighter. Discovering weight through alignment shifts can allow the patient to explore how strong and light their weight can feel. The patient can become aware of their weight and their alignment with the purpose of creating balance.

The dancer who has less training in ballet has more body awareness and self-consciousness when moving (Kleiner, 2009). Because there is less amount of training, the dancer then needs to focus on the body more to apply all the ballet technique “rules”. For example, when working with a dance/movement therapist a patient in a psychiatric hospital might experience the body in the same way as a “less-trained” dancer. Creating body awareness through alignment can then become part of the therapeutic process in a dance therapy session.

An artist tends to be more mindful of the way he moves, being “technically aware” of his composition and modifying his movements along the process (Chaiklin, et. al., 1993). The patient, according to Chace (1993), has a similar but different experience, since he doesn’t shift or modify movements, but expresses them in a more explosive manner. Creating body awareness then becomes a primary goal in the therapeutic process of a patient in a dance/movement therapy session, with the purpose of creating organization and structure. A dance/ movement therapy participant without background in technique dance might have truer experience when exploring his emotions through movement, in contrast with the artist who alters his experience and might leave behind his emotions for the sake of the audience. The modern dance style is more receptive to vulnerability and a complete sense of openness, one where the artist is able to explore his emotions “indefinitely”, and there is a variance between the artist and the patient. Because the artist’s final goal is to

please the audience member, he in fact modifies his movements with the purpose of being more appealing to the eye, even if this means that his body and mind connection loses strength along the way. Once the participant reaches a place in the sessions where he feels safe and able to open, he doesn't have to modify his movements, making his dance raw and pure. Through dance/movement therapy, participants can benefit from balletic elements that can be used as therapeutic tools, with the goal of coordinating, organizing, and reintegrating the bodies of those who tend to have disorganization because of internal conflicts.

There is a significant connection between body awareness and movement. Alignment, according to yoga master Iyengar (2009) creates an equal distribution of energy through the body. This unity is created by what Iyengar (2009) refers to as evenly "spreading intelligence" through the body (p.102). In ballet, the individual uses their own mind or their "intelligence" to create awareness through the whole body in movement. Because of the body awareness it produces when practicing the style, the body and mind of each dancer are engaged with each other.

The turnout used in ballet allows for the perfection of alignment and the balletic line. Dancers open and expose themselves to the audience when opening their hip socket into turnout. A turnout exposes dancers sexually, revealing their genital area, even though it is not done in a provocative or offensive manner. This in turn causes it to be normalized by the dancer who is participating in the movement, since the turnout is introduced by the teacher as a normal movement that is part of the style, rather than a sexualized movement. It is not a free use of one's inner drives, but rather a stylized composition of the body for another purpose, which is creating the perfect line (Siegel, 1984). In the western culture, freedom of sexuality is culturally tabooed. However, when used in the form of free expression, it is very

evident in many therapeutic environments because of the heavy weight that it holds in personal lives. The dancer on stage naturalizes the use of their sexuality in the dance, and the dance therapist and patients can benefit from the use of the turnout in ballet (Siegel, 1984).

Many of the movements done in ballet combinations, such as the turnout, can be analyzed through any of the movement profiles used in dance/movement therapy. Through the use of opposites, the dance therapist could engage the patients in an opening and closing exercise, where patients can explore their sexuality, pride, and self-confidence. By allowing the participants to show different body parts they could open and close, the dance therapist can also involve the patients' creativity and spontaneity into the exercise. Kestenberg, et al. describe opening and closing as *widening* and *narrowing* (1999). Widening is related to generosity and trust in the environment (Kestenberg, et.al, 1999). Opening up to a group may happen when a safe space is created. Widening is also related to feelings of omnipotence and people who enjoy admiration and attention (Kestenberg, et. al, 1999). Narrowing, on the other hand, is related to discomfort and difficulty of expressing feelings, which is a common factor seen in psychiatric settings. Although they are considered opposites, when used together, they create a balance of what the person may need emotionally and psychologically.

Since the beginning of the dance style, ballet dancers have stood tall, perfectly aligned, and presented them as open and prideful. Finding the "ballet posture" can be an exercise for self-esteem building, for the patients to present themselves to the group and, later on, the world. As part of a group exercise, the dance therapist can direct patients by telling them to both vocalize pride and demonstrate a vertical movement for it. A vertical movement indicating pride can include standing up straight, chest open, shoulders down, legs

grounded on the floor. The patients can embody the space around them, saying phrases such as “I am taking the space! It is mine” and “Here I am” while standing in a vertical position. They can own the space they are in, which can allow them to feel important and significant, building on their self-esteem.

### **Spatial Awareness**

Exploring alignment in the body through ballet can also create awareness of the space surrounding the patient, known as their kinesphere. For example, if the “imaginary string” is pulling the patients from the side of the torso, the dance therapist could direct the patients to try and reach to somebody across the room. Through the use of imagery, the participant explores the space around them, and incorporating the concept of reaching to others forms awareness of the spatial relationship between others in the group and themselves. Through spatial awareness, the patient is breaking through their own wall and becoming an integral part of the group.

Another way of exploring the kinesphere is through the use of *port de bras*, the arm movements used in classical ballet. The dance therapist could begin by leading the group through the exploration, and then invite them to move by themselves and find their own kinesphere. They could also explore their mid-level kinesphere with the hands on their shoulders, a variation of the *port de bras*, with the purpose of discovering their different kinesphere, which can then introduce boundaries. Recognizing their small and large kinesphere is important for the realization of the different boundaries. Linear movements executed through *port de bras* give patients a resource of when to distance and individualize themselves and when to connect with others (Siegel, 1984). Many participants have difficulty understanding where to stand in relation to others when connecting with them

through communication and any other interpersonal activity, so the port de bras can be used as a way of understanding these spatial relationships.

### **Structure and Organization**

Structure can be included in the session as a means of creating cohesion, reducing anxiety, and creating focus. Providing structure has the ability to connect the participants and increase socialization with peers, while still allowing them to explore free expression and improvisation in their own bodies. Structure in dance/movement therapy creates cohesion and solidarity, by giving the participants a direction. The clients can explore their body and feelings, creating their own movements, while still following the directive they were given. Dance/movement therapy differs from ballet because each person's movements explore their personal preoccupations and emotions. Introducing a direction decreases the chances for chaos and losing control of the group, while allowing free expression through movement. Chaos is controlled by the cohesion of introducing a directive in session.

Dance/movement therapy has a similar structure to ballet. In dance/movement therapy, the leader follows a structure, first described by Marian Chace (Chaiklin, et. al, 1993). This structure includes a warm up, theme development, and closure. Following a structure gives dance/movement therapists an outlet where they can slowly introduce a theme, after warming up. The warm up becomes a moment where the participants and the dancers first connect, introduce themselves to each other, and physically warm up. However, warming up is not only a physical event, but also the idea of warming up to each other, through movement and interaction. This style of warm up tends to develop a theme, one which can later be unfolded in the second portion of the session. After this theme is developed, closure should occur, with the purpose of processing the movement experience

and ending the group. The end of the group closes any experience that might have been developed throughout the group, preparing everyone to leave the space by bringing them back to reality, meaning they will understand the movement experience is finished.

Dance/movement therapy and ballet follow a similar structure sequence. Both warm ups develop the group further: in ballet the development is mainly physical and in dance/movement therapy it is emotional, physical, and social. Marian Chace took the technical structure of ballet and evolved it in order to meet her client's needs. However, some groups of individuals might benefit from more structure than others, and this is where other aspects of ballet's structure can be introduced in order to meet the client's needs.

A warm-up in a session develops the group process and theme. There are groups that can benefit from a warm-up led by the therapist, instead of a warm up with fewer directives. Many populations that use dance/movement therapy benefit from the use of structure, and introducing structure in the beginning of the group has the ability to create group cohesion as well as focus. Creating a routine by having everyone follow the leader while getting connected to their bodies and feeling the cohesion of the group can benefit the theme development afterwards. Quickly delving into the exploration of inner drives and improvisational movements might seem terrifying for some. Beginning with a warm up where they can be led through same movements together with peers and slowly develop into their own personal experiences makes the individuals feel cohesion, which builds on safety and trust.

Other groups, for example, might benefit from a routine in the beginning and end of each group, something they start and end with in every session. In ballet, classes begin with a barre exercise, and end with a reverence. Following this sense of structure might benefit

certain populations, such as children. The therapist builds a routine, which will provide the participants with insight on how the group begins and ends, bringing everyone together and creating cohesion as well as a sense of structure. Beginning with a less stylized routine might disrupt the goals of emotion regulation, as well as cohesion and focus. These routines can include a particular song, or a movement sequence that can be done to bring everyone together, by forming unity through rhythm, movement, and music.

There are infinite routes the groups can take in terms of movements, feelings, and theme development. The groups follow a surfaced structure that permits freedom in terms of what will be explored in the group. However, freedom might be anxiety provoking for some participants. Groups can benefit from a more structured experience, one that can still promote processing feelings and emotions through movement, but through an activity.

### **Body Awareness**

Many dance/movement therapy participants have limited exposure to creating body awareness, which makes them unable to become aware of internal feelings and emotions. Body awareness in dance/movement therapy bridges thoughts and feelings as well as connects the body and mind. Dance/movement therapy participants benefit from becoming aware of their bodies because they can understand where their feelings are coming from. For example, stress can be felt in many ways throughout the body. Through body awareness, clients can understand that neck and shoulder pain, for example, correlates with stress they are experiencing.

Body awareness in dance/movement therapy can create positive ways in which the participant can present him/herself to the environment surrounding them. Clients might not realize they are withdrawn from the group, hollowed, or inhibited. Hollowing backwards



might occur as a defense mechanism, to stay away from negative stimuli in front of you (Kestenberg, et. al., 1999). Many factors such as shyness, internal preoccupations, and anxiety, encourage the negative stimuli and provoke the hollowing back posture.

Dance/movement therapists can then foster empowerment through the use of balletic elements such as posture, alignment, and verticality.

Promoting verticality and alignment can foster empowerment for the self and for others in dance/movement therapy. An exercise that might promote empowerment, for example, is to playfully walk around the room with back straight, almost bulging forwards and widening the back, head up high, in a royal manner, and stating, “Here I am!” This will promote empowerment to the self because of the self-assertion it produces, and as a group through socialization. Walking around the room in a playful manner promotes social interaction, laughter, and empowerment. Another instance is for everyone to create superhero poses: since superheroes are defined by power and strength, to embody one can feel liberating. Superhero poses require good posture, and promote self-agency. Processing feelings of strength and power promotes the use of verticality and posture as a coping skill. Participants can use these coping methods in other less structured environments they can find themselves in throughout their daily lives.

### **Conclusion**

This discussion created awareness about how dance therapists implement or have implemented their balletic background into their sessions. Classical ballet elements are used in dance/movement therapy, with a focus on how they benefit the session’s participants, rather than the aesthetic it creates on stage when ballet is performed. The elements discussed are particular in the technique, but are reintroduced in dance/movement therapy to further

deepen the practice. This research served as a connector of the style of ballet with dance/movement therapy, as they work together. Every style of dance is and should be incorporated into dance/movement therapy, since they all have particular elements that could be of benefit to participants.

For future research, it would be beneficial to collect data on the benefits these elements have on dance/movement therapy participants, through experiential groups. Collecting data on this topic will demonstrate the benefits of reintroducing balletic elements into session. Future research might also include ballet dancer's experience with ballet, to note how some dancers view the style therapeutic, even with the limitations it provides.

## References

- Anderson, J. (1992). *Ballet and Modern Dance: A Concise History*. New Jersey: Horizons.
- Amighi, J. K. (1999). *The meaning of movement: Developmental and clinical perspectives of the Kestenberg Movement Profile*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Gordon and Breach.
- Au, S., & Rutter, J. (2012). *Ballet and Modern Dance*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Bernstein, Penny Lewis. (1994). *Theoretical Approaches in Dance Movement Therapy*. Volume I. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.
- L., Cass, J. (1993). *Dancing Through History*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Chaiklin, S., Chace, M., Lohn, A., & Sandel, S.(1993). *Foundations of dance/movement therapy: The life and work of Marian Chace*. Columbia, MD: Marian Chace Memorial Fund of the American Dance Therapy Association.
- Chazin-Bennahum, J. (1994). *The Ballets of Antony Tudor: Studies in Psyche and Satire*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Chodorow, J. (1990). *The Moving Self: Dance Therapy and Depth Psychology*. New York: Routledge.
- Copeland, R., & Cohen, M. (1983). *What is Dance? Readings in Theory and Criticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Daly, Ann, & Siegel, M. (1993). *Done Into Dance: Isadora Duncan and America*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Hanlon, J. D. (1995). *Bone, Breath and Gesture: Practices of Embodiment*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.
- Kleiner, Sybil. (2009). *Thinking with the Mind, Syncing with the Body: Ballet as a*

*Symbolic and Nonsymbolic Interaction*. Symbolic Interaction, 32, p.236-259.

Retrieved from DOI: 10.1525/si.2009.32.3.236.

Kraines, M. G., & Pryor, E. (2005). *Jump Into Jazz: The Basics and Beyond for the Jazz Dance Student*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Levy, F. J. (1988). *Dance/Movement Therapy: A Healing Art*. Reston, VA: National Dance Association, an American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance.

Siegel, E. V. (1984). *Dance/Movement therapy: Mirror of Our Selves: The Psychoanalytic Approach*. New York, NY: Human Science.

Whitehouse, M. S., Adler, J., & Pallaro, P. (1999). *Authentic movement: Moving the Body, Moving the Self, Being Moved*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Wallock, S. F. (1983). *An Interview with Trudi Schoop*. American Journal of Dance Therapy, 6(1), 5-16. Retrieved from DOI:10.1007/bf02579516