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Mind, Memory, and Motion: An Exploration into the Art of Personal Dance

by

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ABSTRACT

Mind, Memory and Motion was an eight week class designed to offer new experiences to the non-dancer with their own movement vocabulary. The goal was to create an environment where individuals would use movement to allow the body to express its own voice and needs. The movement would speak about their lives and be used to communicate to others in a nonverbal fashion.

Improvisational exercises were designed to assist the students in accomplishing the goal. The class also stressed listening to the body for information about one's self. Other art forms were used as a stimulus for movement.

The second part of the project was an evening performance that stressed movement as conversation. The students from the class were invited to participate in part of the evening. The goals of the performance were to pursue the author's own use of improvisation in the exploration of boundaries, and to encourage community members to become interested in the area of personal dance.

The class was successful in connecting some of the students to the art of personal dance and they are continuing the work on their own. Several of the students were teachers that have taken the work into their classrooms. An ongoing movement group has been formed. The performance connected with other individuals who are now participating in movement on a weekly basis.
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I. Intent of Creative Final Project: Mind, Memory, and Motion

Life is a process of change and in that process we seek out new pieces of information to construct our world view. Boundaries are the areas where we confront and acquire new information. The examination of self and others at the point of discovering a boundary has been a fascination, especially in the area of movement. My experience with adults is that early on they develop a view of themselves as a learner that can either promote or inhibit the development of new skills. Negative views of one's ability as a learner often result in diminished human potential. Public school happens to be the environment where for most of us these views are firmly planted. This is made difficult because of the limited scope of intelligence previously held by public schools and society. Howard Gardner's work, *Frames of Mind*, defined seven intelligences and then recently an eighth was added: linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and the naturalist. Success in the public schools relies heavily on good skills in the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences. The other intelligences are less often recognized by schools.

Early on we engage in new experiences using all of our senses to receive and express information. Even before birth, movement and touch are primary senses. We begin our lives tied to a physical language of touch and movement between mother and child. This language remains a primary form of communication for some individuals. We speak through movement, a language not fully appreciated by our culture. Howard Gardner in *Frames of Mind* states, "There has been a radical disjunction in our recent cultural tradition between the activities of reasoning, on the one hand and the activities of the manifestly physical part of our nature, as epitomized by our bodies on the other. This divorce between the 'mental' and the 'physical' has not infrequently been coupled with a notion that what we do with our bodies is somehow less privileged, less special, than those problem-solving routines carried out chiefly through the use of language, logic, or some other relatively abstract symbolic system."

The Final Creative Project for the Creative Pulse was designed for the
purpose of integrating the knowledge I had gained about the importance of bodily/kinesthetic intelligence into my own movement work and to share this experience with other individuals in my community. This was a two-fold process. It consisted of teaching a class and creating a performance. The class would be based on finding one's own movement; it was designed for the individual who had movement needs that had not been, or could not be fulfilled through the usual day-to-day activities or in a typical dance class. My hope was to share my new respect for movement as a vehicle for creative conversations with one's self and others. My own work in the class would build on the repertoire of personal performance pieces I had performed at the University of Montana. The performance, *Neogenesis*, was intended as a public statement demonstrating my exploration and commitment to movement as a form of interpersonal and intrapersonal communication.

Jerome Bruner states in *Acts of Meaning*, “To get a general notion of a particular self in practice, we must sample its uses in a variety of contexts, culturally specifiable contexts.” Teaching a class in creative movement for adults fulfilled a need to practice a leadership role I had not previously taken in our dance community. The performance would provide an opportunity to “tell my story” of renewed connections and art as conversation.

II. Achievement and Evaluation of Mind, Memory, and Motion Creative Movement Class

In August of 1998, I contacted Darryl Farrens, director of Homer Community Schools, to teach a class in the fall. The Homer High School Green Room was reserved for eight weeks on Thursdays, September 14-November 19, 1999 from 7-9 pm. The class was advertised through the community schools bulletin and posters. Over the eight weeks 13 individuals participated, with five students who came on a regular basis. The class ranged from 3-13 students, but generally had 5-7 participants. A fee of $25.00 covered expenses. (See Appendix 1)

The individuals who signed up, with one exception, had little or no background in dance. This was a significant step for some of them. My goal in the first classes dealt with intrapersonal communication through movement and
creating an environment that would allow participants to cross old boundaries into new territory of their own movement language. To aid in the task of reconnecting the body/mind, we began the first class with relaxation exercises. However, the students became too relaxed; most were coming to class directly from work and it was difficult to get them moving again. Incorporating shorter checks within the class to find tension or to get in touch with a particular body part proved more appropriate.

The idea of listening to the body was not novel, but to then let the body initiate and respond, from impulse rather than command, was a new piece to add to the students’ vocabulary. Choosing a concept such as “gathering” and allowing the body to fully express this was an open-ended movement warm-up that worked well with the students. I would prompt them to use space and body parts that were not being explored in order to push the students further. Imagery activities from Taking Root to Fly by Irene Dowd, were used to help them awaken and engage their imaginations to review how their bodies move through space.

Teaching adults is quite different from teaching children, especially in the area of creative movement. Adults are very guarded and careful in comparison to children. Evaluating the class and the individual needs was difficult at first. During the first couple of classes, I would ask for feedback to help determine the direction of the class. The students were unable to determine their needs/designs, or they were not yet comfortable enough to express them.

By the fourth class, the teaching/learning process had become more of a conversation. We experienced the focused concentration and involvement defined as “flow” by Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi. This was apparent by the comments made by students at the end of classes concerning how quickly the time had passed. The class became a consistent group of five students and a sense of togetherness developed. At this time, I brought in art supplies and began to incorporate visual arts as inspiration and direction for movement. This process has been useful in my own work to tap the deeper levels of consciousness. We started using simple line drawing as an invitation to move, exploring the individual natures of how the lines spoke to us. At the end of that class, time was reserved for writing. I asked specific questions, “What has been helpful?” “Please speak about the pace or variety of exercises.” “What other areas would you like to explore?” and “Do you have any concerns?” The
evaluations guided my planning for the following weeks and led to work with balance, color, and some work in contact improvisation. (See Appendix 2)

We began to use photos, paintings, and our own drawings as inspirations for movement. One exercise that really stimulated the movement conversation began with the students seated in front of large white sheets of paper. They spent five minutes listening to music and visualizing a dance. Using pastels or markers, they then drew their dance. These drawings were taken individually and studied by the group. The individual who did the drawing set the parameters of the piece: “Do you want music?” “Would you like to control the beginning or ending of the piece?” “Do you need any props for this piece?” and “Did you want to interpret it yourself, or have the others involved?” This exercise led to some beautiful movement interactions, and real involvement by the students in shaping their statements.

We also experimented moving to poetry and started to use voice with movement. We worked moving to the poetry literally and moving in response to the voice as if it was more like music. Vocalizing in class had always been kept to a minimum, even when encouraged. This was definitely an area in which the majority of students were not comfortable. The poetry opened them up to using the language a little more freely, playing with the words and sounds. Improvisation to poetry became a part of the performance we would do in February.

Fine arts, especially dance, have been relegated in our society to the talented few. This has created a divide between the average individual and art. If you ask people about their creative endeavors, they will often respond with the preface “Well, I am not an artist (dancer), but....” The mystique of being an artist has diminished the value of creating personal art in everyday life. In my own life, I have worked to overcome this perception. The benefits are tangibly expressed in improved physical body posture, flexibility, and reduction of stress. The intangible benefits are there as well, for I have found value in using art to negotiate interior terrain not accessible to verbal/linguistic intelligence. The class was successful in helping the students explore creating of art on a regular basis for personal development and it established my teaching ability in this process. (See Appendix 3)

In evaluating the eight weeks, I found from reading my journals that the first classes were not as successful; I was less comfortable and so were the
students. This reflects what I have found to be a natural progression in the teaching/learning process. As my confidence and ability to read their needs improved, their ability to communicate and willingness to experiment progressed. The class did develop into a core group, but it was not as consistent as I had hoped. Life circumstances, including a measles outbreak, created difficulties for people who were enthusiastic and started the class, but were unable to finish. Other students dropped because the class did not fulfill their particular needs. The class fee was set for the entire eight weeks to encourage people to make a commitment and I struggled with how to handle the drop-in students. It seemed that after the third week the core group had developed enough that their work was not affected by an additional member. We saved some time at the end of class for feedback and journals, but if I was not specific, this was generally not productive. Students stated that issues concerning the class and movement were part of their personal journals at home. When asked, they preferred to keep moving, this was their priority for the class time. The students who came most frequently were interested in continuing the work in the spring. One of the students discussed leading the group and she was very helpful in my performance in February. Another individual has started taking dance classes on a regular basis and modified the exercises for her third grade class.

There is a real need and desire in our community for a movement experience designed around improvisation and creative movement. During the class, several uninvolved individuals expressed a desire to join us and I encouraged them to come. To make that step into moving again, or for the first time takes a lot of courage. In my own experience, I watched local dancers for six years before signing up for my first class. Therefore, I wanted to be available for the individual ready to make that step. Those individuals did not join us, but they did come to the performance and have asked for information about future movement classes and workshops.

The last class was videotaped, and one student informed me afterwards she specifically did not attend because of this. It was unfortunate that I did not videotape the last several classes as that may have reduced this concern for that individual. The other factor that decreased attendance was weather, the night of the last class there was a snowstorm. The seventh class had six individuals and only three were in attendance the last evening which was disappointing. The
students chose to move till the end of the class and wrote evaluations on their own time. We discussed future opportunities and most of the students expressed interest in a movement group that has cooperative leadership and intend to join us when we begin in the spring. This phase of the project took me into the new territory of teaching creative movement to adults. I enjoyed the last weeks immensely and am considering co-teaching a class in the fall of 1999.

III. Achievement and Evaluation of Neogenesis, the evening performance

In August, when I returned from Montana, I met with my improvisation partner, Vicky Gordon, and told her of my performance plans. At that time we decided to work together on the project. Our goal was to put together an evening that would share movement as a language for conversing with self and others. We both have been involved in long-term studies, mine with the Creative Pulse Program at the University of Montana, Missoula and hers in San Francisco with Body/Mind Centering™. We agreed that part of the evening would be devoted to individual expression, through movement or words, of the work concerned with our respective programs. The other pieces would be developed out of our work together and from my fall class experience.

Neogenesis was scheduled for February 20, 1998 in the Green Room of Homer High School. Leader Green, a local non-profit alternative theater group, offered assistance in the production and technical aspects of the performance. My students from the fall class also expressed interest in being involved in performance and production for the evening. After the fall class, the studio time was spent developing my solo piece, reworking the duet "Bound", and experimenting with improvisational options for the performance. Annie Moylan and Brad Kloekle, two friends who had worked with improvisation, agreed to do the duet and to work with Vicky and I on the improvisational pieces.

The question that I had begun to explore in Montana dealt with what helps an individual succeed and how others help or hinder the process. In my observations of children and adult learners I realized that the way we touch our deepest self with words and actions has a great deal to do with the way we touch others. Those individuals who are self-supportive through word and deed reframe their problems into challenges without debilitating self-recrimination.
My own search into the question of “How do we touch others?” became a teaching performance to demonstrate the power of our influence to touch, literally and figuratively. (See Appendix 4) When we begin to explore in the learning process we come to the edge of the “known”. Crossing this boundary to seek new information can be an exciting place, but can also bring us into conflict with old beliefs, habits and social conventions. My focus for the performance was in creating pieces that explored a few of these personal boundaries.

During the planning of the program, I realized that the Personal Performance and Personal Teach done in Missoula represented foundational work and would be important to include. They represented my first expressions that dealt with my exploration of boundaries. The first two pieces, “Kinetic Sculptures” and “Boundaries,” contain elements from my own and others’ Creative Pulse performances. “Kinetic Sculptures” was designed to establish the evening as an interactive environment, creating a situation where questions might arise concerning whom we touch, why, and the effect. I was bound with a silver rope (two pair of scissors were placed on a stool upstage of the bound figure) and in the center of the space around me were nine other individuals that the audience had been encouraged to touch. (See Appendix 5) The audience entered upstage right and my plan was for them to walk through the performance space to their seats. After watching the video, I realized most of the adults managed to work their way around to the seats without interacting with the sculptures. The children were quite free with their touch and play with the sculptures. The adults were more reticent, but some were repeatedly drawn to touch the sculptures even after taking a seat. After the performance, one individual related her discomfort with my situation. She kept trying to touch me in a way that would move the body to free itself from the bonds. As she reflected, she realized that the other sculptures were also bound as well, bound by invisible agreements of waiting to be touched to move. This examination of touch and just how we confine ourselves was one of my goals that I hoped would be conveyed through this piece.

Vicky sat out during this time and acted as a facilitator to the first piece. She was very interested in watching people’s responses as they entered. “Kinetic Sculptures” was successful in creating an environment that encouraged involvement. Puzzled looks indicated questioning minds as people took their seats. In speaking with other adults, they revealed that they did touch sculptures
that were on the edges. One individual found the environment "unsettling" and needed time to get comfortable before interacting. We were asking for an engaged audience rather than just observers and this first piece helped to establish this intention.

It was very strange to give up my control during this first part of the evening. I had no idea whether people would touch the bound figure. At first I was involved in what was happening outside of me: Who was moving?, What was I hearing?, Were people touching the sculptures? I began to relax in my role to focus on touch and sound. The didgeridoo and drums provided an important element of connection between movers and audience. The piece lasted a bit longer than intended due to the late closure of the house to seat people. Overall, I was very satisfied with the effect of "Kinetic Sculptures," though were I to do it again, I would change the entrance to encourage more contact between the people and sculptures.

We had asked the time-keeper to use the Tibetan bell to signal a move into the next piece. This transition was smooth and worked well to keep the dialogue going. The audience had been instructed to take seats at the tone and the Boundary readers began at that time as well. "Boundaries" (See Appendix 6) was a word exploration that I had created for Personal Teach. Five friends seated throughout the space began reading at the tone. During this time the silver rope was being cut and I was unbound except for a blindfold. Again, I wanted to break the space between performer and audience. The action of going in the seated space to find the readers, touching, asking for help, and silencing the readers one by one achieved this. When I did this in Montana, my last lines were lost in confusion of movement and sound. The last lines state that boundaries are lines we create and are not stationary. Life changes either compel or propel us into reviewing and revising our boundaries.

When I watched the video, I felt the timing here was off. I moved too quickly and would have preferred to allow more time for the voices to be heard. The 20 minutes of being blindfolded was a bit disorienting and my conception of time and space was distorted. When asking people which pieces moved them these first two pieces were often cited as having an impact on the observers. My neighbor who had never seen improvisation and very little live dance, came into the space not expecting the sculptures to be live individuals. She needed some
time to orient herself and did go into the space to touch the sculptures after seeing a friend do so. She stated she felt as if time had been slowed down.

Three pieces "Breath," "Poetry," "Conversations and Debates" developed out of the work I did during the fall class in combination with the ongoing work done with Vicky. Poetry had become an important part of my creative life well before my term in Montana, but I had not shared it publicly until then. In Montana I experimented moving to the spoken word with Carmine Chickadel. This was an exciting way for me to experience and process poetry, another way to be moved by it. I asked students to bring poetry the sixth week of class, finding they too enjoyed the challenge of listening and responding kinesthetically to the spoken word. The group found the experience was captivating kinetically and visually. Our performance group began to experiment with poetry with a similar response. The reality of doing this in front of an audience changed the experience. In rehearsal, we were more comfortable playing with the words and when I was able to see, I could use the information from the movement to direct my vocals. During the performance an eye condition prevented the use of my contact lenses and I, unfortunately, did not have good vision. The lights and audience were distractions and while there were moments during the poetry that felt connected, this was the section I was least happy with that evening. My own connection to the words remained quite literal. However, when watching the video afterward I was pleased with the interplay among the dancers and the shape of this work. It was much more satisfying than I had expected from a viewer’s perspective. I found moments of connectedness between the movers with the group working synergistically with the words.

"Breath" was an exercise used in fall class and with Vicky to expel nervous tension and to get the body parts connected and communicating with each other. The exercise consists of playing with your breath, for example long exhales that move you across the room, short coughs that cause spasmodic movement. These may be done individually or you may end up using another’s breath as an impulse to move. The breath also is a bridge between the performers, giving information about the energy level of the people one is working with. This was a common greeting in my class and with our performance group. We felt this was a good way to warm ourselves up and it would demonstrate the use of breath to connect with one another.
Movement conversation was used in my fall class to encourage the students to respect the language of movement and to expose them to each other's movement vocabulary. Listening to yourself and others can be as difficult with movement as it is with the spoken word. This provides practice in remaining open without an agenda and giving an honest immediate response. The immediate response format is sometimes able to bypass the judgment or critique we give to a more "schooled" response, therefore we move into new territory. When we don't have time to think, the body has an opportunity to forego habit and move in a fresh, new way. The captivating part of "Conversation and Debates" was the humor that resulted from the unexpected. This exercise, more than any, allowed my students to loosen up, have fun, and move in new ways. "Conversations and Debates" highlighted movement conversation that is integral and equal to our daily verbal communication.

On my way to the performance, I was thinking about the time that I would use for speaking. Vicky and I were both going to speak to the audience about our respective programs and our views of movement. I had decided to speak about movement as a language, both intrapersonal and interpersonal, and a gained respect for bodily/kinesthetic intelligence. On my way to the performance that evening I realized that Bonnie Marie's Elbows was an important piece of the work marking the beginning of trying to find words to express the bodily/kinesthetic intelligence. Annie Moylan read for me and I was able to move. This piece struck a chord with the audience, expressing an experience they could relate to. The ability to recognize—often after the fact—that our bodies have information that we need to listen to comes before the ability to readily interpret and dialogue with them. The speech therapist at our school was really struck by this piece and has asked for a copy of the poem to share with other speech therapists. She has over the years become fascinated with how much of our communication is done nonverbally. Her immediate comment to a friend concerning our performance was "I don't think I could start moving in front of others, but I intend to go home and move in my bedroom." My expectation is that others were struck by the urge to move and encouraged to validate their own movement experiences as an important way of receiving and expressing their world.

The idea for the improvisation "And the night began over there..." arose during a stay at my cabin late in November when we were beginning our season
of dark winter days. The idea of involving the audience in helping to move the
piece was fundamental to the direction we wanted to head with the
performance. This was an experiment that I presented to our group and was the
most difficult to get a grip on, as practice required an audience. We did receive
assistance at several rehearsals, but the effect was not close to the interaction of
the performance night. The initial idea was to work only with audience and
performer vocal echo response. In January we decided to try to add music as an
element in this piece. It took several weeks to find musicians interested and
comfortable with improvisation who had the time to work with us. The cold
weather forced us out of our first rehearsal space and snow storms cut short
other rehearsals with the musicians. Nevertheless, we were excited about the
interplay and decided to use the musicians and play with it. Laura Forbes,
Leader Green director, assisted us during the last rehearsal in providing
audience response and critical advice. This piece had a lot of relationships;
performer to audience, performer to performer and performer to musicians. If
the audience was to see these relationships, it would be important to clearly
establish them. At Laura’s suggestion, I started the improvisation by developing
the vocal/movement relationship between performer and audience. The next
layer was the relationship between the performers and their impact on each
other's movement. We added the music as the third layer after the first two
relationships were established.

The audience had been invited to participate through invitations, placed
randomly on the seats. (See Appendix 8) While we had asked friends to come to
rehearsal to provide this feedback, we were very curious to see how the
audience would respond. That evening we had a very vocal group, surprising
the movers and the musicians. The effect was quite different from any rehearsal.
The vocalization took precedence over the other relationships. This was
unexpected, but I think successful in establishing the evening as a conversation
and a shared experience.

"Bound" and "Openings" were the two pieces of mine based on set
choreography. The duet, "Bound," had been first performed the summer of 1997
as a part of my Personal Teach. The intent of the piece is to explore the
relationships between the different selves within us. It is about recognition of the
debate and choices we make in confronting and/or supporting the divergent
needs of those selves which are inexplicably intertwined. These selves are wrapped neatly together in the physical human body.

Annie Moylan and Brad Kloeckle offered to work with me to recreate this piece. We met once in December, and began formal rehearsals in January. The concept was more important than keeping to the exact choreography and I was working with two entirely different body types than the original dancers, Marvin Pauls and myself. During the first two rehearsals we played with the intent, dynamics, and the choreography making some necessary changes. At the end of January I set the piece and then asked Annie and Brad to continue to work it on their own. They worked through the concept and choreography to develop the movement, which thrilled me. This piece, in retrospect, felt the most complete. Reworking this piece and being able to observe it, I had time to listen to it and make changes. Specifically, at the end of the piece there was a tightness, a feeling of being wound that needed to be freed to demonstrate the self-supporting self.

"Openings," which followed "Bound," has developed from the first conception created in the apprenticeship last summer, but still felt unfinished. "Openings" began to form during assignments given by Karen Kaufmann. One was to do a study based on a visual image. The Art Train was in Missoula that weekend and I saw the Georgia O'Keefe print "Opening of Air and Space." During the summer I worked on listening to the body and allowing it to speak rather than putting movement on to it. I took a conceptual approach, thinking about the image and what openings I was looking for, working the piece from the inside out. In Montana, this was my work and I could focus on this as other physical requirements and relationships were taken care of or not present at that time. In Alaska, teaching, family, and community relationships, while supportive, demand a certain amount of energy.

When I worked on this piece I went to the studio alone in hour and a half segments, took reading and writing materials, and tried to create a space that allowed the body to speak. Time during the school year is regimented making it difficult to create the quiet space needed to allow ideas to arise from the cacophony of daily duties and routines. The openings I am interested in are psychological boundaries that present themselves as opportunities to look at sides of ourselves to which we normally don't have access. *The Art Spirit*, by Robert Henri became a guide. In this work, Henri speaks of the importance of
painting the idea behind the physicality and his concern with defining the arena of your work to keep your focus narrowed. Achieving a narrow focus required eliminating distractions and turning down other artistic opportunities.

At this time, I began to think of the piece as a painting; the contrast between the open and closed spaces became important. The piece is not a story that can be read or a conversation that can be repeated, but deals with asking questions about age, illness and a curiosity concerning the changes they bring. As the performance date approached, I made the decision not to try to force closure on this piece. This would also provide myself with time for the body to speak as freely as it could during that situation. The choreographed section was roughly three minutes of the six minute piece of music; after that time I would try to move from the ideas generated, allowing the body to play in that space and time. The sound technician was asked to fade the music when I returned to the starting position. During the performance, I remember being very involved with the movement, but not unaware of the watchers. My tendency in life is to rush, and not fully develop an idea or allow it enough time to settle, that I may see its effect. That evening I felt successful initially, but am now more critical after watching the videotaped performance. What felt like a sufficient time for the movement to settle during the performance did not really allow the quiet spots in the piece to be fully formed from a viewer’s perspective.

IV. Evaluation of the Creative Pulse Program and the Effects in my Personal, Professional, and Artistic Life

The final project of this master’s program for me is very much a public statement of my views concerning the importance of recognizing the body/mind in communication. For many, there is a diminished quality of life resulting from the lack of recognition and respect of kinesthetic intelligence. We need to value the information the body/mind is able to transmit intrapersonally, as well as interpersonally. The education and use of art as dialogue was central to both the class and performance. The grounding of these beliefs were a direct result of the experiences and studies in the Creative Pulse program. The leadership role emphasized in the program was the impetus behind both stages of my final creative project. Connecting with people who love to move was important to me
for personal growth and community development. The "final" part in this project is hardly accurate, but more of a marking of steps into new territory.

While teaching the class was difficult, it was not a totally unfamiliar role. Past experiences in the classroom provided a valuable resource. The impact of the class for me was the realization of the importance of the release and opening of our bodies for the individuals who attended. Finding a place where one's own creative movement is encouraged and supported was a life altering event that has culminated in the completion of this master's program. The self-examination that takes place in artistic pursuits encourages continued personal growth, which has proven invaluable to me. Eight weeks was a short time to develop the cohesive atmosphere that allows for growth, but it was successful in planting the seeds for further work. One individual is now taking dance class on a regular basis. Another is working on getting a group together to meet regularly to dance. Several of the students are teachers that have used the movement ideas in their classrooms. There are also those individuals for whom it was a good time to exercise and were not moved beyond the physical.

The performance, on the other hand, was adventure into the new territory of creating environments for improvisational works. While performing in public is not new to me, producing an evening of my own work was intimidating. At the same time, it was exhilarating to make this public statement and commitment to ideas. The challenge was to create an evening of dialogue that would raise questions for the performers and audience concerning the importance of movement in our daily lives, a performance that would be a co-creation between watcher and watched. Making the commitment to performing improvisation-based movement is difficult. Improvisation requires an ability to really listen to your own body and to those with whom you are working, a particular challenge when you have an audience. My tendency is to be drawn out of an internal focus and become self-conscious. The ability to focus improves with practice and by clearly defining your goals, and performance allows for this practice. One statement I heard from several individuals was that the night was completely different from other "dance" performances they had attended. There were some who described a spiritual nature to the movement and their reception of it. For myself, it was a tremendous release to open myself to sharing these new expressions of my creative work in my own community.
In 1996 when I first arrived in Missoula to start my graduate work in the Creative Pulse program, my vision was that the summer would include a good deal of time spent in the studio, gaining new vocabulary from working with a new teacher. This did not happen. However, I found myself using movement as an integral part of processing new information and experiences. I began using movement in totally new ways. The amount of reading in the program was incredible and there were times when I could no longer comprehend the readings. Using movement to increase my ability to focus was an experiment. I found if I walked very slowly while reading, my attention to the information improved. Walking and dancing allowed ideas to work through the body which then formulated into creative projects and verbal constructs. This ability or use of movement had occurred incidentally in my life, but at this time I was exploring it seriously. The dance studio became a place to work on my journal, both in movement and writing. It was frustrating to not have a good method for saving the movement, such as videotaping; one needed to rely on memorization. I realize as I write this that, the solo piece “Openings” is much like a look into a personal movement journal. The concept of choreography as a method of recording movement “thoughts” was new to me.

The carryover in my classroom began with using Brain Gym activities and discussing movement as an aid to learning with my students. Placement of students who need to move to learn was a new concept that I began to address through experimentation. I wanted to find a solution that worked for them and the other students seated nearby. Seating the students who are “movers” in the back together where their movement is not as big of a distraction to others is one strategy I have tried with some success. Allowing for frequent change of place and position also works quite well. We tried substituting quiet manipulation of clay to replace other noisier movement choices and increase the student’s focus. Integrating abstract concepts through both literal and problem solving movement situations is a strategy that was reinforced. The long afternoons of sitting in the Montana Theater really drove home the importance of movement to increase attention and focus.

The academic understanding of the theory of multiple intelligences supported the beliefs I had developed through fifteen years of teaching and study. It did, however, create a new sense of importance in evaluating students in ways that would recognize their abilities in areas outside of the traditional
testing done in the verbal linguistic and logical-mathematical areas. Performance testing through oral performances and projects is now a piece of my evaluation procedures.

My studies in multiple intelligences increased my awareness of connected skills; for example the child who is unable to do tanagrams (Chinese shape puzzles), which require good visual organization, are the same students having difficulty acquiring mathematical concepts and problem solving. Realizing that spatial and logical-mathematical intelligence were both needed for these skills led me to question if activities such as playing with tanagrams would improve a student's visual organization skills. Then would this practice transfer to improved development of mathematical concepts and problem solving skills?

Recognition of a need is the first step to the layering process in education that with practice brings real change. The Creative Pulse program provided a crucial layer in demonstrating the effectiveness of addressing skill development using the creative process. We became familiar with tapping into the less frequently used intelligences to teach, reinforce and evaluate skills.

My hope was to find a program that would help integrate my vocation of teaching and my avocation of dance. The Creative Pulse program which focuses on art as a vital activity for all individuals, incorporated both elements of my life and widened my creative focus to include poetry, music, and visual arts. My view of myself as an artist has a great deal more to do with seeing myself as an explorer, rather than the medium I choose to work with, such as thinking of myself as a dancer. This has changed the way I present art to children to emphasize the importance of artistic dialogue rather than just expression. My classroom now explores the connections between different mediums, using visual arts for example, to inform another, such as music or poetry. In the science unit on sound, we listened to and drew visual representations of different musical selections. We then used the drawings as inspirations for movement. These experiences were used to develop and discuss the patterns and ideas of sound waves. The development of the artistic/creative process combined with teaching technique allows students to explore their relationships to themselves and their world. This has become the goal of art education in my classroom.

Finally, the power of the personal story in education was demonstrated time and again in Montana. The use of my own and student narratives has become daily routine in the development of academic, social, and artistic skills.
Personalizing the teaching/learning process is a goal I started working on long before starting my graduate work in Montana. The work in the Creative Pulse Program took the past years of exploration and forced me to identify, verbalize, and embody the belief that we are all artists. The emphasis on leadership and commitment constantly put one in the place of examining where the boundary of personal responsibility to community has been drawn. So, I find myself time and time again on the beach looking where the tides of change have erased my mark and asking myself just how far I am able or willing to give to demonstrate the power of art as dialogue vital to life.
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APPENDIX 1 - Information poster and class attendance
Mind, Memory
and Motion

Find your own movement and create
your own dance. This class is for
anyone who loves to move, regardless
of experience.

Classes are sponsored by Homer Community
Schools and taught by Lu Anne Nelson.

Thursday Nights
5:30-7:30 pm
Green Room
October 1, 1998 for 8 weeks
For more information call 235-6524
Fee for 8 weeks: $25
APPENDIX 2- Evaluations from the class, midterm
Life is a dance. Our first piece created by changing an everyday routine into flowing movements exemplified that for me. Reminders to change levels, use different body parts, and give 8 beats to a part are helpful to me. I loved the elastic bands last week—used them with my kids to get them “movin’”—especially together. For someone who expected to be taught “how to dance,” I’ve changed to realize it’s from within and there is no one way to express, just like in other art forms. I’m quite content with the pace and variety of the class—I’m soaking it in and find you a great teacher—I’m discovering that as I work with kids moving, I’m not needing to teach them “steps,” just experimenting with discovering how they can move as individuals. Then we’ll tackle “listening” to each other’s movements in a cooperative way. —Thanks, Truane! Debbe
Having poor proprioception, it's been really fun for me to think about moving my body through space as an image and being led by suggestion as an example. And creativity. It is as if space becomes an extension of me and expands as well as helps define me, for me. I love the sense of play, openness and support. I feel very comfortable here and can leave most of my self-consciousness that keeps me back at the door.

The music is great — the wide variety via a smorgasbord of rhythm, texture, sensuality and suggestion.

The variety in exercises is really interesting and has been a interesting path to creativity.

I love your smile, enthusiasm, laughter and support.

The grounding exercises in the beginning help me to be here and drop the working, analytical mind for awhile. It's been fun to interact w/o words, w/o movement and space.

I miss how color would inspire dance, or maybe I missed that session. S.
How to keep balance in space.

Stretches is great it makes me realize how my body is moving.

Improving and in all my groups..

Improving like working with other male poisons.

It is interesting and when open.

Feedback.

So far.
Freeing my energy.
Keep each class different.
Perfect -
like alternate pace
slow / fast.

Come because 5:30 time.

My body wants to move
in an unnatural way.
Have problems learning
pattern of movement.
(Fainted out of class,
didn't count)
APPENDIX 3- Evaluations from the class, final
Evaluation - Dance Class - MaryDowns

Overall the class intrigued me and pushed personal limits. It kept the class refreshed and that was accomplishment since it was after work.

In class was very supportive and specific feedback for each individual which was very important after performances. Dance is like writing a novel that it is very personal and needs to be treated as such to protect the individual's personal interpretation. This particular class allowed people to dance without particular steps or preconceived knowledge and when you present a piece for an audience with no preconceived knowledge you feel out there and susceptible to the feeling of failure.

The classroom environment was safe allowing for the opportunity to experience another avenue of expression myself when some body has been held in a
although i did not experience a connection between this class and my art. i feel like i should have practiced more with the class to experience a connection, which i didn't do. during the class i did experience the sensation of constant thoughts about patterns of words, ideas for painting and starting to feel the connection to the other players in the class when playing with group movements. it would have been interesting to continue the class and maybe add journal entries at home after the class. definitely think if the class was continued i would see and feel a connection between the different arts, as an individual you need to feel comfortable doing what you are doing before allowing it to affect you in another area. if offered again i would definitely take the class.
Luanne—Here are my thoughts about your movement class this fall. I hope it comes in time to be of use to you. Your class certainly met and even exceeded my expectations. I learned more about myself moving than expected and also have many ideas as to how to encourage children to move. For me, it was surprising to discover movement to words, photographs or even silence was effective....I always thought music was a necessary component. I found the exercise when we repeated a "normal, everyday movement" and then exaggerated it, changed levels and sizes a very good beginning activity for movement. It emphasized that we are constantly moving, and many movements flow naturally in everyday events, and that can be carried into creative movement pieces. I liked working with another person on this, teaching each other our routines by showing. It was comfortable to teach and then learn. The environment was very supportive and encouraging. I think the group warm-up at the start of class really helped create that atmosphere.

What I have done to apply this class to my own second and third grade class includes: 1. Using the black stretchy fabric loops to create shapes (triangles, squares, zig-zags...) to encourage cooperation, non verbal communication and creativity. The kids love them! I used the warm-up exercise of walking, changing pace, changing direction, etc to start sessions and it helped children define their own personal space. We drew images of a folkdance I taught, stressing pattern, rhythm and even color to represent mood. This year our school goal was to teach children how to critique visual art. The elements of art (line, shape, color, texture and space) we use to critique visual arts were a natural connection to movement; line, shape and space in particular. Also, the exercises to improve balance that you taught us were very valuable, as I discovered that many young children were unable to balance themselves on both toes or on one foot—finding your "center" was a challenge for some!

In closing, Luanne, I really appreciated your attitude during our classes. You really modeled an encouraging, accepting atmosphere which is so vital when students are taking risks. That attitude helped build a sense of freedom to experiment and feel what our bodies naturally want to express. Thank you!
Dear [Name],

I am sorry I did not get to the before I left on vacation. I have many excuses and I have brought my list of long-awaited things with me to Oregon. I hope this gets to you in time to be of some use.

As I think about the movement class, what remains in my memory are several overall impressions.

The first is the sense of play. That movement is free, without being the focus of moving in front of other people. This playful movement could not happen without your display of the same, in every moment and genuine, bright smile. It is that childlike, simple, transparent, place in me that I have trouble reaching. I work to redress. It manifests in the way I hold myself throughout the day and creates rigidity in my body. Becoming more playful in the class helped me redress a fluidity in my body.

I loved the language of movement. The performance made that piece much more clear and direct to me. Being fairly relaxed, I probably commented more through my body than I am aware of generally. This exercise enabled body language and language of movement more conscious for me. Being aware
of my nonverbal language would make my communication more clear and I have another took it use in addition to words.

Finally, I tend to be overly critical of my coordination, sense of rhythm and gracefulness, finding all of these lacking or not as good as those around me. In that respect I gained a measure of acceptance in the class for my body and how it wants to express itself. Again, it was the environment and your strengths and leadership, I knew that fostered the acceptance. You had comments that we were excited about the movements you saw, just everyone in the class. I believe it takes great skill and true intention to create such an atmosphere. The acceptance of my body I have been able to carry on outside and I find to be critical as well, what it looks like, how it feels, what shape it is in. I can hold the acceptance and show it change together.

So thank you for your offering in the community, giving it

_yourself and leading the way._
_your enthusiasm and excitement_

_not holding back to share are_

_greatly appreciated._
Traces of We, State of Me

Welcome to the State of Me.
There are a few things you should know. Please leave all unnecessary bags in the green room. Rob will see that it is locked and will be waiting safely upon your return.

You may encounter some initial barriers, but please forge on.

While visiting, please remember the following things: this is an exploration, please TOUCH, be careful and aware, use your own map.

IMPORTANT. The language may be slightly different from what you are used to. The following three signs you need to know:
sign    signified
one tone.......read/reflect
two tones.......watch

........................touch

How we touch others is the question?
In answering this question, we must first explore-

The dance, the meeting ground, the intimate space between the me, of who I am and the me, who I would choose to become.

We are but stardust washed by rain held together by the gravity of will we shed of ourselves daily traces, comet trails of touch and empty spaces
Upcoming Performances

Leadergreen
"Winging It: Kachemak Bay Festival"
of Short Plays
May 6-9, 15-6
e-mail smokybay@syx.net
if you wish to submit a short performance proposal

Pier One Theatre
"Carousel"
Fri & Sat February 26 & 27, March 5 & 6
Auditions: "Taming of the Shrew," &
"All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten"
March 12 & 14

Downward Dog Productions
Peter Mulvey at Alice's Champagne Palace
March 5
Guy Davis at Alice's Champagne Palace
April 1
John Gorka at Alice's Champagne Palace
April 16
Clave
Radislav Lorkavic at Alice's Champagne Palace
May 14

Homer Council on the Arts
San Francisco Scottish Fiddlers at the Mariner Theatre
April 18
Jubilee '99 at the Mariner Theatre
April 23
Greg Brown at the Mariner Theatre
May 2

Kenai Peninsula Orchestra
Youth Concert at the Mariner Theatre
April 24

Neogenesis

Welcome, we ask that you remove your shoes if possible, as you will be entering through the movement space. If this is not possible, no problem, please just stomp off the snow.

We invite you to enter the first stage of the evening. The kinetic sculptures in the space are placed there for you to observe and touch. Touch brings change. Touch will shape. Allow your thoughts to settle, observe the interaction. Explore the space. A tone will indicate it is time to take a seat.

Please feel free to stay and discuss tonight's performance and/or play after the show. We are interested in your views of movement.
LuAnne Nelson - What is the first touch you remember? For some of us, movement is an essential language that has no adequate substitute. In my graduate program at the University of Montana, I began to ask through my art, “How do we touch others?” Before answering this question, I believe we need to explore the question, “How do we touch ourselves?” especially, the dance, the meeting ground, the intimate space of the “me” of who I am; the “me” I choose to become. Dance is the art of touching the world. I encourage you to do more than watch tonight. Absorb the impact physically and let your body respond.

Vicky Gordon - My Body-Mind Centering teacher is the first person I heard say, “movement is my primary language.” She would often teach by moving and I would “get it.” I’ve loved being in this training group, where sharing through movement and touch are common. I have come to truly know that movement is my primary language. Orison is not a dance; it is a sharing on a subject and a process of deep interest to me. I invite you to be a participant, listening not just with your ears, but with your body and your cells; these can inform your mind.

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Directions to performers assisting with "Kinetic Sculptures" and "Boundaries"
kinetic sculptures-
(sound digeridoo)
go to spot take a shape
keep an internal focus, respond to others only with movement
hold shape until the body requests a move or until some one touches you
let the touch shape you
play with the touch in terms of where it takes you
come to a rest, hold and repeat
if a touch moves you across the floor so be it
at about 7:35, A Tibetan bell will sound - that is your signal to take a seat
thanks

boundary readers
when the bell is sounded take a seat and start to read
if you come to the end of the list of words
read the text at the end
you do not have to read with anyone else, though at times you may end up in sync, no problem
set your own pace, stop and breathe when you need it
read until I touch you and then stop
your part is finished
thanks
APPENDIX 7- Bonnie Marie’s Elbows

Bonnie Marie’s Elbows Have a Mind of Their Own

Bonnie Marie’s elbows
greet the world for the rest of her arm

(A pointed breakthrough?)

"Here I am! I have something to say."

wrists behind elbow, palm behind wrist, finger behind palm

They are the opposite
of the open "bow"
that has been asked for.

Open arms lengthen from spine to fingertips

Bonnie Marie
is a dancer
arms are to be shaped
like an open bow
elbows floating unseen to support and guide.

(Bonnie Marie’s elbows want to be heard.)
Bonnie Marie's arms can be shaped, like the beautiful bow.
I have seen Lynne relax the shoulders, smooth the arms into the gentle over curve that rides on the strength of the back 
(and by the way, hides the loose drape of upper arm)

Bonnie Marie's arms taste the shape and savor the release.

And then,
we move.
I look over,
and I see her elbows.

Bonnie Marie can see the difference, she can describe the shape of the arms, desires, works, makes every conscious attempt possible.

Bonnie Marie tries hard, too hard.

But, Bonnie Marie has not listened. Bonnie Marie's elbows have something to say.

Written on the streets of Missoula, walking to Caras Park the evening of July 6, 1996 Lu Anne Nelson
APPENDIX 8- Instructions for "And the Night began..." improvisation

If you are willing to participate in a simple vocal improvisation please read on, if not pass this to the next person -

During the improvisation-
"And the Night Began Over There....."

Whenever you hear the word “night”, we want you to say “Who?” You may need or wish to say it several times, vary volume and duration as needed. Play with your response. It is impossible to do it incorrectly.

If you are willing to participate in a simple vocal improvisation please read on, if not pass this to the next person -

During the improvisation-
"And the Night Began Over There....."

Whenever you hear the word “there”, we want you to say “where” You may need or wish to say it several times, vary volume and duration as needed. Play with your response. It is impossible to do it incorrectly.

If you are willing to participate in a simple vocal improvisation please read on, if not pass this to the next person -

During the improvisation-
"And the Night Began Over There....."

Whenever you hear the word begin or began, we want you to say “really” You may need or wish to say it several times, vary volume and duration as needed. Play with your response. It is impossible to do it incorrectly.