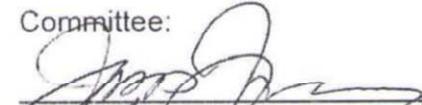
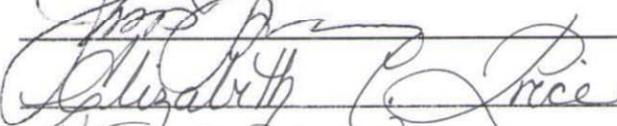
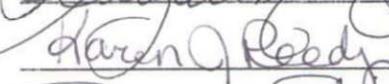
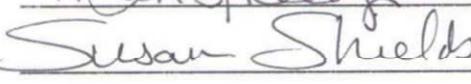


THE DANCER-AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP

by

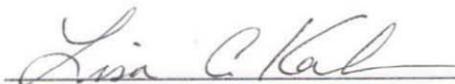
Luis R. Torres-Ortiz  
A Thesis  
Submitted to the  
Graduate Faculty  
of  
George Mason University  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree  
of  
Master of Fine Arts  
Dance

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Date: July 28, 2014

Summer Semester 2014  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA

The Dancer–Audience Relationship

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts at George Mason University

By

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to GOD, for giving me the strength and inspiration during the hardest period of my life. This is also dedicated to all the people who believed in me and contributed to the realization of this dream. And lastly, I dedicate *Bereave* and its artistic expression to all believers in Love and everybody developing strength by facing Indifference.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In a world focused on mass productivity and competition, where artistic expression may be in danger of extinction, I am grateful for having the platform to explore and develop movement as a tool to investigate the complex phenomenon that exists between a dancer and the audience.

I would like to thank George Mason University School of Dance for creating such opportunities and offering me the support needed for the fulfillment of this study. I want to thank The Washington Ballet's Artistic Director Septime Webre for believing in my many talents and allowing me a flexible schedule during this scholastic journey. I am forever grateful to Dr. Victoria N. Salmon's endless encouragement and trust of my artistic endeavors and scholastic capabilities. And I appreciate Dr. Kimberly Eby for her time and great counsel on how to adapt a survey to fulfill the needs of this investigation.

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I was fortunate to have a cast of undergraduate dancers full of talent, trust, dedication, and openness during the creative process of *Bereave*. I also thank the Long family for their love, endless support, and believing in all that I do. I am humbled and forever grateful.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE DANCER–AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP

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George Mason University, 2014

Thesis Director: James Lepore

This document describes the investigative process of the dancer–audience relationship through the exploration of emotions as movements. I choreographed an eleven minute and forty seconds (11:40) dance piece called *Bereave* to the music composed by Ariel Ramirez and sung by Ane Brun, “Alfonsina y el mar” (“Alfonsina and the Sea”), and Gert Anklam’s “The Sound of Time.” The underlying story of my choreography involved the experiences of an individual letting go of ideas, material possessions, situations, circumstances, or people that no longer support one’s journey toward the future.

It was my choreographic intention to create a dance piece anchored in images inspired by music that elicited emotions from the dancers. It was my expectation that this process would prompt an emotional connection between the dancers and the audience.

I conducted a survey and collected the audience's feedback after the inaugural performance of *Bereave* on December 9, 2013, in an intimate dance studio transformed into a performance space at George Mason University's De Laski Performing Arts Building's room 301. I was eager to know at what point(s) the audience felt most moved, touched, and/or inspired.

Just as I wanted to learn from the audience, I also wanted to learn from the dancers, so I conducted a post-performance interview/dialogue with the dancers to document their experiences.

In the process of reviewing all the gathered data, I learned that the invigorating and gratifying phenomenon of the dancer–audience relationship comes from an unquantifiable source.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As a professional dancer of twenty years, I have been haunted by the indescribable connection with the audience while performing. As an artist I focused on creating moments that touched, moved, and inspired the viewer. I have always wondered if that connection comes from the audience's presence, or from the movement I am executing.

For example, during a preview performance of a male duet called *Exit Wounds* choreographed by Diane Coburn-Bruning at Ballet Nova in Falls Church, Virginia, the choreographer, a male dancer, and I had the opportunity for a post-performance discussion. The audience was touched by some of the images they remembered from the duet, but in particular the male members of the audience were impacted by one specific moment: The moment when I am facing away from the audience on my right knee with left leg extended on floor as I reach backward with my right arm to cover the other dancer's eyes. At the same time the other dancer is attempting to stand up toward the audience to reach for the unseen (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Moment in male duet *Exit Wounds*. Photo by Paul Wegner.

The reaction and feedback from the audience was overwhelming. Specifically, the men in the audience were touched, moved, and mesmerized by that gentle, nurturing, yet strong and masculine moment. Instantly, the audience started to ask Diane Coburn-Bruning, the choreographer, what was her intention and what was it that she was trying to make them (the audience) feel? She responded, "I do not want to dictate what the audience should feel, but rather have you [the audience] experience it. There is no wrong feeling or emotion." She also offered an explanation of her vision and purpose for the male duet. Through this male duet's choreography, she wanted to convey the challenges our society encountered when wounded soldiers returned home.

It was a rewarding gift for the artists to receive instant feedback from a performance that had such an emotional impact on an audience. We (the choreographer and two male dancers) were able to create a world that invited the audience to identify with their own experiences. As a dancer, I felt fulfilled by my ability to communicate a choreographer's vision.

As a developing choreographer, I am interested in exploring the dancer–audience relationship by investigating the emotional impact my choreography might create. This was the inspiration that led me to create *Bereave*, a narrative modern dance based on the exploration of how love and indifference translate into movement and the impact this might have on the audience. This document describes the intentions, methods, and tools used during my dancer–audience relationship investigation.

## 2. ASSERTION OF PURPOSE

An artist has the need to communicate and connect with the audience. As a performer and choreographer, it has been my motivation to touch, move, and inspire whoever is watching the dance performance. Eagerness to create an impact upon the observer best describes my intention as a dancer and choreographer. The energy and fulfillment that an artist experiences when audience members share their feedback after a dance performance often leaves the artist with a sense of curiosity regarding the moment of connection. Was it due to the execution, the intention, the motivation of movement, or the story/character being portrayed?

For the purpose of this study, the objective was to evoke an emotional reaction and identify the moment the dancer–audience relationship came into existence. Emotional reaction in this context refers to:

a powerful source of human motivation is a medium and a message. A subjectively experienced state of feeling, emotion constrains us and inspires us as we create cultural forms and meaning, and as we relate to each other.... It is inexorably linked to movement and that's how emotions announce themselves inside our bodies. (Hanna, *The Performer-Audience Connection* 5)

In life, one does not need to be an artist to explore philosophical questions: What is love? What is indifference? How does the human body experience it? The desire to translate this philosophical inquiry into movement examination created endless possibilities and unexpected outcomes. Creating a dance piece based on the exploration of love and indifference and how these human emotions translated into movement was just the beginning. These are emotions that most human beings encounter, but would an audience member be able to identify them by watching a dance piece? The investigation began by simply answering the question “What is love?” According to the *Oxford University Dictionary*, love is “An intense feeling of deep affection, a great interest and pleasure in something, a person or thing that one loves” (“Love”). The same format was followed to inquire about indifference: “Lack of interest, concern, or sympathy, unimportance” (“Indifference”).

In the midst of this personal inquiry while attempting to define these emotions, I heard artist Ane Brun’s performance of “Alfonsina y El Mar” (“Alfonsina and the Sea”). This song, composed by Ariel Ramirez, served as a poetic, musical answer to the philosophical questions posed about love and indifference (see the song’s full lyrics in Appendix A). The song was inspired by Alfonsina Storni’s last poem, “Voy a dormer” (“I’m Going to Sleep”) which she submitted to *La Nación* newspaper in October 1938. Alfonsina Storni’s story states that around 1:00 am on Tuesday, October 25, 1938, Alfonsina left her room and headed toward the sea at La Perla beach in Mar del Plata, Argentina.

Later that morning two workers found her body washed up on the beach. Although her biographers hold that she jumped into the water from a breakwater, popular legend is that she slowly walked out to sea until she drowned (“Alfonsina Storni”).

This story was inspiring, not only because of the lyrics, but also for the impact the song’s musical instrumentation produced in me. During the process of becoming familiar with the song, the sensation of loving something or someone while being able to leave—without considering that the action may appear indifferent—became clear. Listening to Ane Brun sing the words about Alfonsina ignited images that were reflected by movement I then created to explore the emotions of love and Indifference. The dance I created was about letting go of ideas, material possessions, situations, circumstances, or people that no longer support one’s journey toward the future.

Now I had a clear philosophical inquiry that inspired a story about love and indifference, and Ane Brun’s song that matched like a dream, but it was not long enough for a dance piece. I was still in need of additional music that could complete the dance story’s progression. I wanted the choreography’s story line to give the observer an idea about the struggle to freedom being a journey. It was important to demonstrate the choice of moving forward and letting go. While attending a dance concert at Harman Center for the Arts in Washington, District of Columbia, I discovered Gert Anklam, a baritone saxophone solo artist. The song I decided to use for this dance piece was a recording of his live concert at

the People's Battle Monument in Leipzig (Voelkerschlachtdenkmal) named "The Sound of Time."

After finding the music it was important to draw parallels between the music, the philosophical inquiry, and the story line to instigate the kinesthetic expression that helped develop the choreography. These two pieces of music served as an inspiration, supported the story line, and ignited all the images seen in the dance piece. The process mentioned above was the foundation of how the movement came alive and might initiate the dancer–audience relationship. In this exploration, inspiration refers to: "A breathing in or infusion of some idea, purpose, etc. into the mind or soul; the suggestion, awakening, or creation of some feeling or impulse, esp. of an exalted kind" ("Inspiration").

It was exhilarating to have immense inspiration from the music selected. My body was generating movement and my brain was full of everlasting images and ideas on how to convey the human emotions in question. Yet to further understand the exhilaration and inspiration, it is imperative to understand why music is so important.

Music activates the body's senses, creating the need for movement. Growing up with a musician as a father, surrounded by all kinds of sounds, rhythms, auditory stimuli, and being in such a musical environment from such early age, my sensitivity to music was strongly developed. According to Glenn Wilson, in his book *Psychology for Performing Artists*, by ages twelve to seventeen there is "an increase in appreciation, cognitively and in emotional

response” to music (174). Emotional responses to music are significant in this study as they served to provide movement development and as the context to examine the dancer–audience relationship. Wilson also states that, “Music engages our emotions through association with other sounds or ideas that are emotive. It may even present what ethologists call a supernormal stimuli, simplified and exaggerated versions of signals that are evocative in the normal course of events” (154).

It was my intention as a choreographer to translate to the dancers all the sensations and images I experienced while hearing the music; hopefully, in turn, the dancers would be able to feel, recreate, and communicate these sensations and images to the audience. And, as a result, the audience would be able to experience and identify the same sensations.

My resulting dance piece, *Bereave*, premiered on December 9, 2013, in an intimate setting, the Studio Theater at George Mason University, De Laski Performing Arts Building (Appendix B). The piece was one of five dance works presented during the Studio Series/Dance Performance. The choreographic study was created for six dancers (three women: one freshman, one junior, and one senior, and three men: two sophomores and one freshman). The movement was developed as a result of the inspiration gained from the music and the exploration seeking to answer the philosophical question, What is love and indifference?

On the premiere evening, as the audience prepared to watch the dance piece, they received a survey I developed based on Judith Lynne Hanna's book *The Performer –Audience Connection* (Appendix C), which I modified to fulfill the needs of this investigation (Appendix D). I verbally instructed the audience on how to answer the survey and the significance of it for this study. After the audience enjoyed the dance performance it was my wish to have as many audience members answer and return the survey as possible.

The feedback from the audience was important because by identifying their emotions and connections to the dance piece, an insight to the dancer–audience relationship exposed itself. Knowing at what point the audience felt moved, touched, and/or inspired was intriguing. Was it the movement? Was it the dancers' facial expressions? Or were there any other means by which the audience was able to sense, see, or feel at any given moment during the performance? How did the audience feel?

At the end of the performance, after I collected all the surveys, I interviewed the dancers involved in the performance to find out: How was their experience? What was their experience? What was the most challenging? What was the most encouraging?

After gathering information from the performance I examined the following questions: Did both the audience and the dancer identify the same moments and/or emotions? How did the relationship develop, if any existed? Could the relationship be recreated with another dance piece? Could it be recreated with

another group of dancers? Anticipation of the many possible outcomes created both apprehension and inspiration about analyzing the dancer–audience relationship. Discovering the source of this exhilarating and fulfilling phenomenon continues to bring about my passion for movements' expression.

### **3. INSPIRATIONAL OVERVIEW**

This chapter describes the major literary research on the dancer–audience relationship that helped to inspire this study: a master’s thesis by a performer, a book with an audience survey, and a journal article on the psychology of the relationship.

#### **The Process of Preparing to Acknowledge the Audience**

“The Dancer’s Relationship with the Audience: An Approach to Dance Performance” is a thesis by Cynthia Ellen Winter which describes the process of how the dancer prepares to acknowledge the audience’s presence by the time the performance takes place. Winter wrote this thesis from the point of view of a performer while participating in a variety of dance pieces as a graduate student at UCLA.

With a variety of experiences, she was able to look at different theater spaces, audiences (age and knowledge), and dancing roles, and assess how they would challenge her ability to communicate with the audience. She discussed how the audience needs to be part of the dancer’s imaginary environment because the way the dancer connects with the audience correlates with the way the performer evolves with the choreographic work. Some of the suggestions mentioned were the importance of the choreographer or director

allowing a sufficient amount of time before the piece is performed in front of an audience, allowing time in every rehearsal for a run-through of the entire learned choreography, and incorporating images of conversations with an audience. Another idea that she wrote about is utilizing one's physical senses and intuition when approaching the relationship with the audience. She explained that when performing the same choreographic work multiple times it felt like talking about the same topic to different people.

Winter described in detail all of her performance experiences within the context of the points mentioned above. There were five different choreographic works of diverse styles of movement, message intention, and performance spaces. She also pointed out the specific successes and failures of the dances.

In her conclusion she expressed that dancers who are able to attract and hold the interest and attention of the audience are talented and skillful performers. She continued that the relationship begins by the mere acknowledgement that an audience will be present at the performance. This relationship is essential in delivering the artistic message, because it is then when the dance piece has been completed.

As a professional dancer I can identify with her experience and the magic she described as a natural gift. As a choreographer, Winter's study offers insights on how to help the performers deliver an artistic message. Also, Winter's ideas that creating a continuous workflow of the dance piece and acknowledging that

an audience will be part of the space were great insights for the dancers' performance preparation.

Winter pointed out the type of space in which the performances took place because, she stated, the space determined the type of acknowledgement and involvement the audience has with the dance piece. For the purpose of my investigation it would have been beneficial if Winter would have gathered the audience feedback from the same performances she described in her thesis. It would be fascinating to examine if what she described as a successful performance from a dancer's perspective would have been the same for the audience attending the performance.

### **Multidisciplinary Investigation With Audience Survey**

*The Performer–Audience Connection*, a book by Judith Lynne Hanna, investigates how movement expresses emotion and how the audience perceives it. She utilized multidisciplinary tools to collect information from eight dance performances that took place in Washington, District of Columbia, as part of the Smithsonian Institution Division of Performing Arts Dance Series. This book served as the foundation for my thesis investigation on the dancer–audience relationship because of the style of dances choreographed to investigate such a relationship. I reviewed the findings from two of the eight dance performances reported in the book.

I evaluated Hanna's description of the following dance pieces:

*Resurrecting a Tamaris Spiritual* by Repertory Dance Theater of Utah, and

*Symbiosis and Short-Circuit in the Avant-Garde* by Douglas Dunn. The composition of the audience in terms of gender, their knowledge about dance, the emotions audience perceived, and how they identified those emotions are the elements I considered for this review. Also, for the purpose and interest of my thesis, I adopted her definition of emotion, as well as a modified version of the survey she constructed to collect the data discussed (Appendix C). Hanna described emotion as being

a powerful source of human motivation is a medium and a message. A subjectively experienced state of feeling, emotion constrains us and inspires us as we create cultural forms and meaning, and as we relate to each other.... It is inexorably linked to movement and that's how emotions announce themselves inside our bodies. (*The Performer-Audience Connection* 5)

The findings for the Repertory Dance Theater of Utah's (RDT) performance were supported by the audience survey responses and conversations with the dancers prior and subsequent to the performance. RDT was a company focusing primarily on reconstructing dance pieces from the modern dance pioneers, but at the Smithsonian they performed a new dance piece by Helen Tamaris, *Negro Spiritual*. Hanna interviewed the performers to find out what feeling they wanted to convey. The popular response from the performers was jubilation, the feeling they described as, "A religious fervor type

of feeling.... [It] feels sort of like what my energy adds to the group and what the group adds to my energy..." (88).

The audience was made up of 30 participants, of which 53% were females. Out of the 30 participants, 17 considered themselves somewhat knowledgeable about dance, 6 very knowledgeable, and 5 not knowledgeable at all. Vitality and happiness were the emotions that 83% of the participants perceived from the performance, which seemed to be in line with Tamaris' choreographic intentions. Other emotions were ecstasy with 73%, and playfulness with 67%. The most popular clue the audience chose to describe the performers' expression of emotions was by how the performers used their body parts. Some of the other clues were quality of movement, energy, and non-dance factors. According to the survey responses and the artist interviews, Hanna concluded that RDT achieved the goal and succeeded to convey their message of vitality, ecstasy, and jubilation.

In contrast, Douglas Dunn, said that he just wanted to perform the dance (*Foot Rules*) and create space for the audience, which he considers to be comprised of individuals, to feel whatever comes up for them. Dunn expressed in his interview with Hanna that with this philosophy, the audience (individuals) can experience their own feelings, in relationship to what they see, and perhaps encounter more than they could have before. Interestingly, the audience reacted mostly negatively to this dance work, *Foot Rules*, as they felt there was no story line to follow and the music was not pleasant.

There were 125 audience members of which 62% were females. Of the audience members that answered the questionnaire, 28% described themselves as very knowledgeable in understanding dance, 43% somewhat knowledgeable, and 15% not knowledgeable at all. Even though there was a negative reaction—including some audience members leaving the concert—a third of the respondents perceived emotions like vitality, caring, eroticism, and competitiveness. The highest perceived emotion by 55% of the respondents was playfulness.

Hanna observed that some of these audience members had difficulty categorizing and expressing what they observed. She also said “a genre of dance may determine a viewer’s emotional response to a performance” (105). Perhaps the piece *Foot Rules* was too avant-garde for the audience. Regardless of the emotional perceptions or reactions from the audience, Douglas Dunn created the space for the audiences’ response. The feedback was diverse and controversy arose. Is that not the purpose of avant-garde?

This book provided the foundation for my research about the dancer–audience relationship. The survey Hanna developed and used in her book served as the template for the survey I used to gather the audience feedback after the performance of my narrative modern dance piece *Bereave* on December 9, 2013. An important element to the survey was how Hanna used emotions to measure the dancer–audience relationship, as I adapted and drew on similar emotions to the ones used in her study. Also, the post-performance interviews

component of my thesis came from reading the conversation Hanna had with the artists of both dance groups. Although Hanna did both pre- and post-performance interviews, for the purpose of my investigation I only did a post-performance interview with the dancers in *Bereave*.

Hanna laid the foundation for defining the dancer–audience relationship phenomenon throughout her extensive research career. The resources she cites are not only for modern dance, but for all types of dance, offering a variety of viewpoints to investigating the human condition relating to movement (dance). Hanna’s findings during her time at the Smithsonian were thus encouraging and apt as I examined the dancer–audience relationship using *Bereave*.

### **Psychology of the Relationship**

During my investigation of the dancer–audience relationship, it was important to understand the audience’s feedback by surveying the audience’s emotional perception after the performance. Amy Herstein Gervasio’s article “Toward a Psychology of Responses to a Dance Performance” described the psychological phenomenon that already exists between the dancer and the audience. These descriptions were helpful in identifying the possible scenarios of the dancer–audience relationship during this investigation. Her report was based on research in dance education merging dance and psychology.

Gervasio’s purpose was “to apply contemporary principles in cognitive and social psychology to understand how Western ballet and modern dance is imbued with emotional and narrative meaning by an audience” (257). This

statement was important for my study because I intended to investigate the dancer–audience relationship via modern dance choreography anchored in the exploration of how love and indifference translated into movement.

Gervasio began her report by exploring various dance philosophers' points of view on the purpose of dance. She came across the argument "that one of the primary effects of dance, especially in comparison to other arts, is to evoke 'imagined' emotional and expressive properties" (257). These findings are in correlation with Hanna's standpoint in another book, *To Dance is Human: A Theory of Nonverbal Communication* (1988), where she explores the definition of dance and its purpose: "Dance...tends to be a testament of value, beliefs, attitudes and emotions..." (28); "The communicative efficacy of dance lies in its capacity to fully engage the human being..." (66) "with the purpose to express, evoke and transform emotion..." (76).

Other variables that Gervasio mentioned in her research, but did not explore in depth given their complexity, are the impact of music and lighting in the insinuation of emotion. During my investigative process of *Bereave*, examining the impact of music, but not lighting, was important since the performance took place in a studio theater space where lighting design was limited. These variables are significant while exploring the emotional impact and feedback from the audience given that lighting design creates atmospheres that inform the audience with visual cues.

In Gervasio's analysis of emotion and dance, she found an inconsistency in the naming of categories of movement and emotion, with the exception of Ekman's emotional grouping and Labanotation, which fit with my findings that the related research literature supported one point of view or another rather than the multidisciplinary approach I sought. Another theory presented was the use of Gestalt concepts of "perceptual organization" as applied to dance. These theories and tools were helpful in bridging the choreographic work with the findings from the audience's survey. Gervasio explained the "universality of the six basic emotions" (267). She stated, "a variety of different dance audiences may imbue similar emotions to similar movements, even across different dance genres and contexts" (267). She discussed the six basic emotions—happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and disgust—but also acknowledged that "joy, fear, sadness, and surprise have historically been the staples of dance movement—they are part of the universal human experience" (268). Some of these emotions were included in the survey I developed and submitted to the audience after they saw *Bereave's* dance performance.

The other element presented which was of significance to my study was the amount of dancers in a dance piece and how that suggests a possible meaning of a narrative. Gervasio described the significance and the perceived meaning of solos, duets, trios, family, rivalry, and spirituality. The solos' description is noteworthy in the dance piece I created, because Gervasio expressed it as "a depiction of the interior consciousness existence or fantasy life

of the dancer” (271). The imagery and story I shared with the soloist dancer (the sensation of loving something or someone while being able to leave, without considering that the action may appear indifferent) throughout the choreographic process was harmonious with the above description.

At the end of the article Gervasio discussed the many theories and hypotheses one can find to describe the indirect relationships and emotions attributed to a dance or perceived by an audience. She also mentioned the many variables that one might take into consideration for future inquiry, for example, “the level of dance training and performance familiarity of the audience” (274), which I examined with my survey. The other subjects were:

- “Whether watching dance measurably changes the emotional state of an audience” (274), and
- “Whether gender plays a strong role in the attribution of emotion and relationships” (274).

A great revelation for Gervasio, that I found very attention-grabbing, was that the “pedestrian audience agreed on one or two core emotions in plotless same-sex duets when danced with or without music, attributing more rivalry and anger to male–male duets than to female–female ones” (274). This is fascinating in the gender context and in order to investigate whether music or movement persuades dancers, dances, and stimulates emotional reactions.

Gervasio’s investigation offered great insight into the spectator’s psychological perception of dance, as well as support to understand that there is

an inconsistency of categories throughout dance research for describing movement and emotions. The information offered by Gervasio was helpful to me when calculating the results of the answered surveys and reviewing the post-performance interview with the dancers. When analyzing the impact *Bereave* had on the audience, considerations of space, music, and audience knowledge about dance were important, even though a human condition and cognitive processes already exist that might create a deviation in the audience's perception.

The clarification about the idea that the number of dancers and how they are structured in a dance carries preconceived meaning was instrumental as I valued some of the audience's feedback in the answered surveys. The dance piece *Bereave* included a soloist and a group in the first section, and was followed by three couples in the second section. The structure made it somewhat predictable to perceive the creation of *Bereave* as a narrative modern dance piece that included the basic emotions (love, anger, etc.) mentioned in Gervasio's article. The basic emotions discussed from a psychological viewpoint were supportive of my dancer–audience relationship investigation. The similarities in judgment between Gervasio's and Hanna's research were also reassuring in moving forward.

## **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

How could I evoke a dancer–audience relationship during a dance performance? It was my choreographic intention to create a dance piece anchored in images inspired by music that elicited emotions from the dancers. It was my expectation that this process would prompt an emotional connection with the audience.

### **Casting**

I chose my cast of dancers on August 28, 2013, at 12:30 pm at the Dance Department undergraduate program’s audition at George Mason University’s De Laski Performing Arts building room 301. I selected dancers from each undergraduate class (two freshmen, two sophomores, one junior, and one senior). I was fascinated as to how the different levels of dance training would impact the development of movements. The musical interpretation and the story line implications within the dance became stimulating to choreograph. Also, the diverse age and maturity of the dancers provided an exhilarating element in how the emotional content of the performers would evolve or not.

### **Structuring the Dance Piece**

My dance piece, *Bereave*, had a two-part musical structure. The first song was Ane Brun’s version of “Alfonsina y el Mar,” a Spanish narrative song about

the drowning of a poet, which I presented with a soloist and group. I translated the lyrics and told the dancers my intention for the first section, which rested on the feeling of loving something or someone while being able to leave, without considering that the action may appear indifferent. The second piece of music was “The Sound of Time” by baritone saxophone solo artist Gert Anklam, where the dancers became color-coded couples. The name and the timing (the musical structure) of the song inspired the movement in the second section.

I developed the movements combining two dance methods. The first choreographic method was replicating the imagery I envisioned floating in my mind as I heard the poetic words in Ane Brun’s “*Alfonsina y el Mar*” (Appendix A). I placed the dancers in space to reflect my mental pictures and then connected the imagery with movement in space. For example, there is a verse in the song that goes:

*Cinco serenitas te llevarán  
Por caminos de algas y de coral  
Y fosforescentes caballos marinos harán  
Una ronda a tu lado.  
Y los habitantes del agua  
Van a jugar pronto a tu lado*

English Translation  
Five mermaids will take you  
Through paths covered in seaweed and coral  
And fluorescent sea horses will make  
A ring around you  
And the inhabitants of the sea  
Will soon play by your side

The image in my head was a lift by the group carrying the female soloist from stage left to stage right, and afterward escorting the female soloist from stage right to stage left and creating a circle around her. I decided to recreate the image by having the three males lifting the female soloist and the other two females of the group supporting the lift, creating a high moving image that matched both the song's lyrics and the story line of *Bereave*.

The second approach involved the exploration of how love and indifference would come across as movement with the rhythms of Anklam's music. Improvisational techniques of expansion and contraction, vertical versus horizontal, and explorations of elements, colors, and partnering phrases were the common tools used to develop the second section. Love and indifference were emotions that, as a human, I was challenged and forced to question given a variety of personal life events which fueled my imagination and inspiration for the story line during this choreographic process. I decided to investigate love and indifference through movement in space with diverse musicality that prompted emotional reactions. This process became an invigorating journey with a group of talented and eager undergraduate students.

"Space," for the purpose of this thesis, refers to "the paths and patterns the dancer traces in the performance area. This includes geometric forms and a sense of whether it is symmetrical or asymmetrical" ("Space"). And when mentioning time I referred to "speed and rhythms" of the music or the movement in contrast with the music ("Time"). The underlying story of my choreography

involved the experiences of an individual letting go of ideas, material possessions, situations, circumstances, or people that no longer support one's journey toward the future.

### **Process**

Rehearsals were scheduled once per week on Mondays, beginning September 9, 2013, with a few exceptions due to the scholastic calendar (see the journal of events included in Chapter 5, Findings). The rehearsals took place from 12:30 pm until 2:30 pm at the De Laski Performing Arts Building, room 301. The choreographic work was scheduled to premiere on November 14, 2013, in the Harris Theater at George Mason University. Given the difficulty of time and schedule circumstances, the performance was postponed to December 9, 2013. Throughout the process I kept a written journal (included in the findings section) of the rehearsals, as well as a video journal of the choreographic evolution.

On October 9, 2013, I completed the basic course for Social and Behavioral Research Investigators administered by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) (Appendix E) in order to gain permission to gather and analyze the information for my dancer–audience relationship investigation. I submitted the study's proposal to George Mason University's International Review Board (IRB) and it was subsequently approved by George Mason University's Office of Research Integrity and Assurance (ORIA).

Following the approval from IRB and ORIA and the required CITI certification to conduct human research, I was able to prepare to collect audience

feedback from the performance. As noted earlier, I achieved this by adapting Hanna's audience survey from her 1983 book *The Performer-Audience Connection* (Appendix C), which I modified, with counsel of Dr. Kimberly Eby, into an audience survey to fulfill the specific needs of this investigation (Appendix D).

The emotions consistent with Hanna's book's survey are playfulness, anger, boredom, shame, and other (a blank choice for the audience to write-in feedback). The additional emotions I included were attraction, joy, freedom, unconcern, aloofness, withdrawal, and confrontation. Throughout the choreographic and coaching process, I categorized the emotions as:

- Love: attraction, joy, playfulness, and freedom
- Indifference: unconcern, aloofness, withdrawal, anger, and confrontation.

Boredom and shame are the emotions unrelated to love or indifference. I kept these emotions in the survey to help make sure the audience was paying attention to the choreography rather than giving random answers.

After the audience viewed the dance performance, I collected the completed surveys. This feedback from the audience was essential in order to understand the audience's perceived emotions and their connection to the dancers for insight into the dancer-audience relationship. I was eager to know at what point the audience felt most moved, touched, and/or inspired. Was it the movement? Was it the dancers' facial expressions? Or was it by another means

that the audience sensed, saw, or felt at any given moment? How did the audience feel?

Just as I wanted to learn from the audience, I conducted a post-performance interview/dialogue with the dancers to document their experiences. I identified: How was their experience? What was their experience? What was the most challenging? What was the most encouraging?

After gathering all the information I quantified the answered surveys using an Excel spreadsheet and created visual graphs that summarized all the findings. I also evaluated the post-performance dancers' interview. I examined the following: Did both the audience and the dancer(s) identify with the same moments and or emotions? How was the relationship developed, if any existed, according to the data? Could these results be recreated with another dance?

I was inspired by this investigation of the dancer–audience relationship through the exploration of emotions as movements in *Bereave*. As will be described in the next two chapters, in the process of quantifying the audience's feedback I learned that the invigorating and gratifying phenomenon of the dancer–audience relationship comes from an unquantifiable source.

## **5. FINDINGS**

This chapter is divided into three sections reflecting the distinct portions of this study: my journal entries throughout the study, the post-performance dialogue with the dancers, and presentation of data from the surveys.

### **Journal Entries**

As a choreographer I was interested in exploring the dancer–audience relationship by examining the emotional impact my dance might generate. As part of this research process I kept a written journal which was a significant part of recording ideas, thoughts, courses of action, and development of events. The following section displays the journal entries kept throughout my choreographic process, from audition day until the day of the performance. I also kept a video journal of the dance rehearsals.

#### **Audition Day**

August 28, 2013

It was clear from the beginning, in the interest of using college dancers/students from each class (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), that at least four cast members, would be needed, but uncertainty was present about the total number of cast members for the choreographic work. After watching the auditions it became clear that six dancers would be the best choice. Three males

and three females were the selected dancers who later, in the dance, became three couples. The dancers for the purposes of this choreographic study are:

- One Female Freshman
- One Female Junior
- One Female Senior
- One Male Freshman
- Two Male Sophomores
  - Male Sophomore 1
  - Male Sophomore 2

The Female Senior was the soloist in the first section (the story about the lead character) and the Male Sophomore 2 became her partner for the second song. They will represent the impartial state (a blank canvas) of emotion and are open to experience both love and indifference. Male Sophomore 1 and the Female Junior were the indifference couple. Male Freshman and the Female Freshman were the love couple.

Even though there are six dancers and they became three couples, they represented and symbolized the many aspects and dynamics that love and indifference have on one person and/or one couple.

### **First Rehearsal**

September 9, 2013

No classes on September 2, because of Labor Day. Rehearsal began by explaining the concept and the story that I wanted to use for this creation. The

movements and the different visuals to be portrayed in space were also clarified. Then the music was played and the translation of the lyrics was provided to the cast. Once the music finished, I started by placing the dancers in the opening positions to match the images I had in my head. Elements that came to mind were water and air, in addition the song talked about drowning. It was a great start to the process. Some of the dancers in the cast were also in my advanced modern class, which helped a lot when creating movement, as they were familiar with my aesthetic and sense of musicality.

## **Second Rehearsal**

September 16, 2013 (Video Recorded)

In this rehearsal the development of dancers' interactions and movements continued. Also started to notice the sensation of not having enough rehearsal time considering that I only have two hours once a week. Still thinking about what the overall structure would or could be, to get the final message, story, and impact of the dance. At this point, acknowledging the pressure of lack of time, some partnering (duet) phrases need to develop.

A fascinating fact from this rehearsal was that even though it was the second rehearsal, and only at 2:10 minutes into the first piece of music, three people were able to watch a run of the piece of what the dancers have learned thus far, and just by the presence of those three people, that 2:10-minute section took on an unexpected emotional shape. Some of the dancers' focus, reactions, and awareness within the group were born and established. It was great

feedback to see the information provided to the dancers and the coaching thus far started to show in their movements.

### **Third Rehearsal**

Monday September 23, 2013 (Video Recorded)

Work on the first piece of music continued. At the beginning of rehearsal, some structural changes were made and then I decided to do another run of the piece for two of the faculty members in the thesis committee. The feedback from the faculty was positive in terms of movement and perceiving the feeling of the story (song). The dancers started to look like a unit regardless of the diverse levels of training and experience. It helps to have people watch the complete run of the dance because I sensed the dancers' awareness and musical timing heighten. By completing the choreography for the first piece of music a sensation of moving forward was present.

### **Fourth Rehearsal**

October 4, 2013 (Video Recorded)

Started by choreographing the second piece of music, which is the second section of the dance. The Female Senior is not in rehearsal due to illness, but I need to move forward and teach her the material during the next rehearsal. I was able to create 1:19 minutes of choreography. But in my mind the thought was "next rehearsal will spend teaching Female Senior all that she missed." Can't help the feeling of taking two steps back to take one forward.

### **Fifth Rehearsal**

October 7, 2013 (Video Recorded)

The full cast was present and we were all able to continue the choreographic process for the second section. The song for this section is from the artist's concert that I found on YouTube. I contacted the artist and at this point still waiting for the artist to send the studio recording of this song. I purchased the CD directly from the artist as the song could not be purchased at any other place. In this section the dancers were separated by gender and choreographed a male section and a female section right before where they come together as couples. The ability to move forward and to have 2:14 minutes gives a visual of the overall structure of the piece, although the time pressure is still present.

### **Sixth Rehearsal**

October 21, 2013 (Video Recorded)

This was our first rehearsal after a week off due to the Columbus Day holiday. The cast was able to rehearse, but I just received the recording of the second song ("The Sound of Time" by Gert Anklam) and the studio recording of the song has an extra two minutes of music at the beginning of the track. Also in this rehearsal Male Sophomore 1 was absent, creating more pressure with the time constraint. With the missing dancer, the extra two minutes of music, and the time pressure, I did not hesitate and jumped into rearranging the beginning of the second section to resemble the new piece of music. I was pleasantly surprised at

how much better this beginning came out to be. I did a run of the piece (both sections) from beginning to what the dancers know thus far. The new two extra minutes of music actually made the piece flow harmoniously.

### **Seventh Rehearsal**

October 25, 2013 (Video Recorded)

Relieved by the ability to have an extra day of rehearsal this week and catch up Male Sophomore 1 with the choreography he missed from the last rehearsal. Most of the rehearsal was spent reviewing and teaching the new dance material. Ran out of time and was not able to complete the run of the piece. Definitely feeling time pressure, and the insecurity of not having understudies for any of the dancers was a nerve-wracking realization.

### **Faculty Showcase Showing**

November 1, 2013 (Recorded by the Dance Department)

Today was the first showing of all the dance pieces in preparation for the November concert and the entire dance department was observing. It does not seem like the choreographic work was evolving or moving forward. Still have two minutes left to choreograph to finish the piece, but because there are only once a week rehearsals, it's been hard to do specifics, clean and coach, and continue the choreographic momentum. Specifically for the males; the females seem to catch on faster and retain more information than the males.

It was decided by faculty members and with my agreement that this study and this dance piece were not ready to show at the November 14, 2013, concert

due to time constraints. I had frustration and relief all in one. It was a fight against the clock that I was not able to conquer.

### **Eighth Rehearsal**

November 4, 2013 (Video Recorded)

After the showcase emotional letdown and the inability to finish the piece for the November 14 concert, we were back in the studio and to my surprise the Male Freshman was not present; he was sick. Male Freshman did not show up for rehearsal. I decided to call him; I asked him if he could come and at least watch rehearsal so when he felt better he would have a better idea of the material being created. He came, sat in rehearsal; he watched and took great notes. I thought this was helpful for him since he is the youngest and least experienced in the cast. It was a productive low-energy rehearsal.

### **Ninth Rehearsal**

November 11, 2013 (Video Recorded)

Today was a challenge to get the males in the cast to understand how the whole body needs to be alive and involved in any movement execution, to create intention and emotional content while dancing.

The Male Freshman was having a hard time remembering some of the steps and understanding the coordination of a few steps during the second section of the dance piece.

The females were very good at retaining and learning the information a lot faster and better than the men (at least in this cast).

I was very aware through this process of the challenges that schedule and dancers' sickness have in the choreographic creation, especially when dealing with young preprofessional dancers.

### **Tenth Rehearsal**

November 18, 2013 (Video Recorded)

This was a full packed day as I met with Kimberly Eby, who advised me in the modification of Judith Lynne Hanna's survey. She also helped me look at the many possibilities for the survey, and how it would best fulfill the needs of this study.

Today was also the day I finished choreographing the dance piece. It was such a relief and a sense of accomplishment. It was also an acknowledgement of the frustration of the process's lack of rehearsal hours and the sensation of taking two steps backward to go a few steps forward. But with the dance piece choreographed, it just needs to be cleaned, coached and rehearsed, so all the details are clearer and the cast would be able to develop the emotional content.

- Love, Indifference and neutrality—how would this come across?
- Is it the movement?
- Is it the music that accompanies the movement?
- Is it the intention behind the movements?
- Does the imagery paired with movements' creation help the delivery of it? Would it influence it?

These were all the questions that started to go through my head at the completion of the piece. The hunger for the audience to feel something or identify with the dance piece intensified.

The plan was to continue to run the piece and refine each moment until show day, which was changed to December 9, 2013.

### **Eleventh Rehearsal**

November 20, 2013

Today I was eager to do a run of the piece as it was newly finished, but the Female Senior soloist was nursing a minor case of foot tendonitis. I didn't want to make the injury worse as I don't have an understudy for her. Instead I decided to talk to them and watched the video of the previous rehearsal's run. It was very good for the dancers to see the video and they were able to understand my corrections and coaching. While the cast and I watched the video of the run of November 18 (day the piece was finished), the Female Senior soloist noticed the hand gesture at the beginning of the second section. The gesture happened when the females lay on the floor holding the male's leg; the male's foot circled the females' hand to place it on their chest; Female Senior realized that it made the females look like they were corpses.

Another reaction was the opening image of the dance piece, when Male Sophomore 2 reacted with admiration. He was in awe of the imagery and how they looked as a group in the opening position. The dance needed more cleaning and artistic intention rehearsals.

At this point I completed the design of the survey and submitted the application form and summary of the study to the Internal Review Board (IRB) website. Now it's just waiting for one of the advisors to approve the survey, to submit it with all the other documents. There was a great yearning to be done with the research accreditation process.

In the process the decision to change the ending of the dance piece came about after having a conversation with one of the faculty members in the committee, who watched the rehearsal the day it was finished on November 18, 2013. The conversation was about where the audience's focus has been directed at the end of the dance piece. The female faculty member felt that the group walking off by dispersing off the stage was distracting the focus away from the Female Senior soloist, who stood downstage left while looking back at the group. From this conversation, I decided to have the group in the same formation as the beginning of the piece, but dissolving away from each other to reproduce the silhouette of the opening position, and still kept the Female Senior soloist downstage left looking back at the group. With this ending it was easier to keep the focus on the Female Senior soloist looking back at the disintegrating group on center stage. The conversation and the visual space composition really helped solidify the message intended. The new ending makes more sense with the songs and the sensation of moving on. I hope it has an impact for the capability to draw some feedback from the audience.

## **Twelfth Rehearsal**

November 25, 2013 (Video Recorded)

Today some structural adjustments to the dance piece were made and it was a great opportunity to clear up some musical cues. During this rehearsal I continued to find difficulty with the Male Freshman to remember his steps and how to approach them while dancing. At this point I decided to review the story and the focus of the dance.

And I thought of a great idea to clean up and simplify the male section, but still keep the same intention and message across. It was needed because there was struggle to keep the males dancing together during the second piece of music. The idea was separating the guys during their dance and have them exit at different points of the choreography, creating a peel-off effect.

## **Thirteenth Rehearsal**

December 2, 2013 (Video Recorded)

This was our first rehearsal back from Thanksgiving break. This was a long break between the last rehearsal and today's rehearsal. We had a run of the dance piece watched by faculty and thesis committee members. Some of the movements' qualities grew and the dancers looked together and were feeling each other's energy. Yet, the male cast members were still having trouble connecting and creating diverse moods of atmosphere and expressions. The female cast members have been there since the first showing.

The faculty and the committee members gave me great feedback. They liked the images and how together the dancers looked (to my surprise). They also commented on how different the dancers looked from the last time they saw the piece (which at that point the piece was still two minutes away from finished). I was happy with the run and the feedback received from the faculty. One of the comments was to create a clearer definition of the gestures the dancers do at the beginning of the second section. The other was to have the male cast members' isolation movement of the arms to be more fluid and playful.

### **Fourteenth Rehearsal**

December 4, 2013 (Video Recorded)

At this point it was just full runs of the dance piece and in this instance a group of students from the dance department came to watch. They said that they really enjoyed the piece. The cast members felt better and started to feel and move as a community. Still having a challenge to have the male cast members stay together creating the same shapes and moving their arms through the same space path. The dance piece was starting to have a sense of cohesion and the dancers felt their unity and they seem to be enjoying the dance.

### **Research Approval**

December 5, 2013

The research proposal was approved by Internal Review Board, and now I can administer the survey to the audience and collect data from their emotional

reactions after watching the performance. I felt encouraged and able to discover something about the dancer–audience relationship.

### **Fifteenth Rehearsal**

December 6, 2013 (Video Recorded)

Last run of the dance piece this week. I brought candy bars for the dancers to create a positive and funny atmosphere in rehearsal. The movements were flowing, the musical cues were clearer, and the musicality of movements was continuous and less awkward. Even though I have fixed and corrected the male cast members' arms and the path they need to use, they still needed some work for spatial awareness. The changes from November 25, 2013, really worked and made it flow better. Suspense describes the possibilities of what could happen on Monday (three days until show time).

### **Technical Rehearsal and Show**

December 9, 2013 (Video Recorded)

Today was the technical rehearsal which I recorded and later the premiere of *Bereave*. There were not too many options for lighting design. The space was the studio we've been rehearsing in throughout the choreographic process. It was more of a black box studio theater than a theater with a proscenium and curtain. The female dresses looked great. The main focus of the technical run was for spatial awareness. The Male Freshman struggled through it and forgot all of his steps. The Female Senior soloist did not feel warm and struggled to find her center of gravity.

At the beginning of the tech I told the dancers to “just feel the space and listen to the music, do not dance 100%—I just want you to feel each other, the space and the intention of the piece.” In this space the audience was be very close to the dancers.

At the end of the tech run the Male Freshman had a breakthrough moment. He shared, “I feel like I am holding the dance piece back because I can’t remember the steps.” And he felt like “I am not adding anything to it.” I talked to him and asked him if he remembered his part. He said “Yes.” And then asked him if he knew the reasons why I chose him. He said “No.” And I explained to that his raw genuine energy, the youthful vibrancy, and being a freshman were all great elements to represent love in this piece.

This breakthrough was great, considering that was one of the reasons I chose the different level classes of cast members. The steps and partnering were challenging. The story was emotionally complex. The Male Freshman and the Male Sophomore 2 were the two males who had the most challenges throughout the process. They were the ones who learned and improved the most. I’ll see what happens tonight during the show.

After the technical rehearsal I picked up the surveys from the printing office. I printed 75 surveys, hoping to get good participation and feedback from the audience. I folded them and right before the piece, while I was explaining the survey and the importance of the audience feedback, two students from the dance department passed the surveys around to the audience.

The dancers did a great job in the show. I collected 45 answered surveys and had a great post-performance interview with the cast of dancers. Some great insights came out of all this data collection.

It was a great relief and sense of accomplishment to complete and present this choreographic work. The written journal, as well as the video journal of the dance rehearsals, were essential tools to keep the thought process and ever-changing events at hand. The written journal most frequently served as an agenda and calendar of ideas, and clarification of some of the challenges encountered throughout the choreographic process. The video journal of the rehearsals provided the visual canvas that aided in the ability to rearrange and create clarification of the dance movements' expressions. As the process unfolded, keeping both journals allowed for the continuous flow of ideas as well as road block solutions.

### **Post-Performance Dialogue**

The dancers' performance experience and choreographic process was half of the data collection necessary to investigate the dancer–audience relationship. It was also important to hear the dancers' reactions after their performance. The conversation gave insight into the kind of relationship the dancers felt during the performance. The dialogue was video recorded and lasted 19 minutes and 41 seconds. The following section is a transcription of this recorded post-performance dancers' dialogue.

Choreographer: We are going to record this, is that okay? Is it okay if we record this? Are you okay with that? I just want to make sure that you know we are recording it.

The Dancers: One Female Senior, One Female Junior, One Female Freshman, Two Male Sophomores 1 & 2, and One Male Freshman

They all said: Yes!

After we settled and everyone was able to fit in the camera screen, we commenced with the post-performance conversation.

Choreographer: Hi Guys, congratulations, you were so pretty, I was so proud of you. How do you feel?

Male Sophomore 1: Great.

Female Freshman, Female Senior, and Female Junior: GOOD.

Choreographer: You felt good?

Male Freshman: Yes, I felt like I performed it.

Female Senior: Yes.

Choreographer: You feel like you performed it. What does that mean to you, "You feel like you performed it"?

Male Freshman: I felt it.

Choreographer: What do you feel?

Male Freshman: I don't know, you [choreographer] said to focus on like loving someone, so I tried to act that out with [Female Freshman].

Choreographer: You feel like you were acting it or do you feel like you were really feeling love?

Male Freshman: I felt like I was really feeling it at points.

Choreographer: Oh good, and what do you think love is?

Male Freshman: Deep questions, I don't know, having someone that you can really relate with and, you know having a person, if that makes sense.

Choreographer: Have you felt love before?

Male Freshman: Yes.

Choreographer: Good, Excellent. Anybody else? What was your experience like?

Female Junior: I go; it was.... It was good, it was like at first it was hard; like last year's piece just being indifference was a lot easier but the LA...Alfonsin~a,

Choreographer: The what? Repeat that, repeat that.

Female Senior: The first song

Choreographer: The first song, "Alfonsina"

Female Junior: It was harder to put the indifference character in it. So it is kind of like...

Male Sophomore 1: Me too.

Choreographer: How come? How come it was a little harder...this time?

Female Junior: The movement, more...softer.

Choreographer: The movement itself was softer?

Male Sophomore 1: I tried to be like...how do I explain this? ...Like I want to love someone but, they didn't reciprocate, so I then that made me indifferent.

Female Junior: That's what I did too.

Male Sophomore 1: Yeah!!!

Female Junior: Kind of like the sad, like the sad part of indifferent vs. like the angry part of indifference.

Choreographer: That's how you focused on the Alfonsina song? Like you were feeling sad because you were giving something that was not giving back to you? Is that what you are trying...is that what you're trying to say?

Female Junior: Yes.

Choreographer: Okay, okay, and how did that translate to your dancing? ...Tonight...versus any other run-through.... What was so special tonight? ...Let me ask, was it special tonight?

Dancers: Yes [all nodding yes].

Choreographer: Was it? For everybody, or not?

Dancers: Yes.

Choreographer: Why do you think it was special?

Male Sophomore 1: Because there was an audience to watch me.

Choreographer: The audience was watching you?

Dancers: Yes, yes.

Female Freshman: And we were in costumes and lights, and the whole experience, I don't know what is it called?

Choreographer: Costumes, and lights?

Male Freshman: Process?

Female Freshman: The whole...

Male Sophomore 1: Atmosphere.

Female Freshman: Atmosphere, yes.

Choreographer: So you felt like you had an atmosphere because you had the costumes, because you had?

Female Freshman: It was more like we were on "stage."

Choreographer: You felt like you were on stage?

Female Freshman: Yes, like performing it.

Female Senior: Yes, you are more vulnerable when you are performing it rather than when you are in the studio.

Female Freshman: and I feel it's a lot easier to perform when there are people in the room.

Choreographer: When you say perform what does that mean?

Female Freshman: Like express how...

Choreographer: Express?

Female Freshman: How you [choreographer] wanted it to be portrayed.

Choreographer: Like how I want it or you want to?

Female Freshman: Both.

Choreographer: Both. Okay. How about you?

Female Senior: I don't know, 'cause when I perform it doesn't matter, well obviously, the rehearsal process you are always trying to do what the choreographer wants, and what they are telling you to do, but when it comes to the performance I forget all of that, and I do what I feel. You know? I rehearse the steps so I know the steps, but when I'm performing and what emotion I'm portraying and what is happening it's me in the moment, you know? It's not....

Choreographer: Is that how you felt tonight?

Female Senior: Yes!

Choreographer: Do you feel satisfied? Do you feel?

Female Senior: Yeah! Well I was saying this the other day actually after the show. It's like when I leave the show it's usually one of two emotions. I am either really giddy and really adrenaline high. Like I want to do everything right now, I want to run a marathon, I want to...like really happy or I leave very like somber like melancholy, I don't know, almost like that's the best feeling but I can't have that in normal life, that only happens in like a show type setting. When I am on stage, you know, that precious moment, you know, so when I leave

I'm kind of like, well I live here and not there, you know, does that make sense?

Choreographer: Yes!

Female Senior: Like I'm always proud of myself, and always feel like I accomplish something, but sometimes I leave sad, I don't know.

Choreographer: Why do you think the sadness?

Female Senior: MMM.

Choreographer: How do you feel tonight?

Female Senior: Right now?

Choreographer: Hum.

Female Senior: I feel... a little bit of both of those things, so not completely one, not completely the other, I don't know. Like I have the adrenaline rush, 'cause I... you know that gives you that rush, but that piece in particular I feel like I leave and I feel.... Like my character leaves, leaves all that behind and that's kind of what I feel about the piece at this point now, like I left it behind and stuff and you know, moving on, like it affected me and is there but I am moving on, I am learning from it.

Choreographer: Good; anybody else? You, mister, I have not heard you say one thing [toward Male Sophomore 2].

Male Sophomore 2: I feel good

Choreographer: You feel good?

Male Sophomore 2: Good about it.

Choreographer: How come? What feels good about it?

Male Sophomore 2: I feel like I connected more to [Female Senior] than I have in like rehearsals and everything.

Choreographer: How come?

Male Sophomore 2: I don't know, I just literally said "screw it," I'm going to do it, I'm either going to fail or going to win, so I just went for it.

Choreographer: That was you're...what were you going for it? Like when you say "I was going for it," what do you feel like? "I'm going for it," what does that mean to you?

Male Sophomore 2: Just doing everything as much as I can, possibly could, and not like holding myself back, but just letting it happen.

Choreographer: Could you give me an example of a particular moment in the dance where you felt the difference in, when you were holding back and you just did it? Is there any particular?

Male Sophomore 2: I think it was probably the choruses of Alfonsina 'cause usually I like get to that sec and then, well, I'm following so I give up in the middle. No, I am going to wait for Female Senior and I waited for Female Senior or I least I think I did.

Female Senior: I think this part in the second section [she makes the gestures of the movement] you went for that because I moved with it too when he was under and around.

Male Sophomore 2: Yes that was a lot more...

Female Freshman: I noticed that and I said "he [Male Sophomore 2], he did it!"

Choreographer: You saw it?

Female Freshman: Yes.

Female Senior: I felt it too.

Male Sophomore 2: But I started all wrong.

Female Senior: It doesn't matter 'cause

Male Sophomore 2: But that part was better, I know I just let go.

Choreographer: So, how do you feel right now looking back, on your experience?

Male Sophomore 2: I feel good; I kind of wish we would do it again so I could push myself even further, but....

Choreographer: We might do it again.

Female Freshman: Can we?

Choreographer: We might.

Male Sophomore 1: In the spring.

Choreographer: We might do it again in the spring.

Male Sophomore 1: For ACDFA [American College Dance Festival Association]?

Choreographer: I don't know if we are going to go to ACDFFA but we might do it in the spring. What is something that you feel you have learned through the process from the beginning of the rehearsal, first day, until now, the performance?

Male Sophomore 2: Go to your toes.

[The entire cast laughed.]

Male Sophomore 1: Partnering.

Female Junior: Yeah, partnering.

Female Freshman: Yes.

Male Freshman: Yes. Partnering.

Male Sophomore 1: Because we don't have a partnering class so everything I learned about partnering I learned from you [choreographer].

Female Senior: Yeah, pretty much.

Female Freshman: Connecting with your partner, the emotion.

Choreographer: Emotion, connecting, partnering. How about you [toward Male Freshman] you know, you [Male Freshman] are a freshmen.

Male Freshman: Yes.

Choreographer: The reason I chose you is because you are a freshman. The reason I chose you is because you didn't have as much experience as....

Male Freshman: Other people.

Choreographer: Well, as much experience period, and I wanted to have a person from each class, freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. It was on purpose that I did that. Because I wanted to see how much I could push and get in terms of emotion content to translate into step. Regardless of the experience, I wanted to see the human side of the dancer more than the actual technician, and in the audition when I was looking at you, you had the most raw energy, you were like [I made a gesture of an oversize movement with a sound of storm]. You wanted to do, you wanted to do it all with a 100% energy. And I was like, "Good that's the one," that's why I picked you, and I just wanted for you to know now after the performance, not before because I did not want to spoil the research part of it but now it's done. So you [Male Freshman] are the most challenged and improved of the group, you came in with nothing; you did not know me, you didn't know what I do or not do. They [Male Sophomore 1 and 2 and Female Junior] worked we me before, I have Female Senior in class and Female Freshman has a lot of experience, from the freshman I....

Female Freshman: I went to Washington Ballet.

Choreographer: Yes.

Male Freshman: Worked with the choreographer before.

Choreographer: Yes, so from everyone you were the most challenged and the most improved, so congratulations that you took it on and you need to be very happy.

Male Freshman: I am, I am very relieved, not relieved but like I'm very, I feel accomplished.

Choreographer: You feel accomplished?

Male Freshman: Yes, I feel like

Choreographer: As you should.

Male Freshman: At the beginning of the year, how am I going to do this, this is not going to happen and I don't know, so...[As he pats himself on the back].

Choreographer: It's all right. The next one would be you [Male Sophomore 2] because I have been on your case the whole semester. What are we going to do with you?

Male Sophomore 2: I have no clue.

Choreographer: [Laughed]. But yes, a lot of improvement, lot of improvement, very good.

Male Sophomore 1: [Pointing at himself] Me too?

Choreographer: Yes, you are just a sponge right now, you are just.... If I let go of that leash you are just going to the woods to get lost, come back, so very good, very very good. It was the hardest

for the guys. You know? You don't have partnering classes and you are not usually expected to do technical stuff at all times, sometimes you are asked to be a supporting part of something, and in this one you were not just a supporting part you were also something and you had a lot of dancing, so congratulations. Especially you [Male Freshman], you should be very happy, you can have ice cream tonight.

Male Freshman: Thanks!

Choreographer: And you [Female Senior], my dear you just grew bounds and leaps; your quality of movement, the freedom, the way you got lost, and the way trusted yourself. Thank you for trusting me in everything I was telling and asking you to do and pushing you and it's really, really beautiful to see. And you [Female Junior] as well, it's always a pleasure to have all that energy; I love it, don't change it, really keep it, keep expressing it that way 'cause it's really refreshing to have that much hunger and willingness. And you [Female Freshman] as well, very very beautiful, nice beautiful quality, very smart, that's very important. So thank you [all] very much. You fulfilled my visions and exceeded my expectation and the whole faculty was just in awe that I made you all look the way you did in the performance. They just kept

coming to me and being like, “Oh my God!!” [Senior Female Faculty] said, “I can’t believe you did that with those kids in a month.” So they [faculty] are very happy and impressed, especially the guys, they [faculty] said, “What you do with the guys, they were dancing together?” For some reason....

Male Sophomore 1: I was watching their faces because they were right there and they were so like...[pointing in front of him].

Choreographer: For some reason to have guys dance together is very impressive; you guys did it. Faculty was very happy and very impressed and they really enjoyed the quality of movements and the steps and.... This piece is very personal to me. I’ve shared with [Female Senior], it’s been a really hard year for me so a lot of my emotional and life experiences I put into this dance and it’s been very healing to see it come to life and be portrayed so beautifully, not only emotionally but also technically. Of course there is always room for improvement, ’cause that’s what dance is, it never stops, that’s the beauty of dance, you never get to that perfect moment, but it was beautiful. So thank you very much, have a great night!  
Congratulations!!!

All Dancers: Thank you.

Choreographer: Is there anything else you want to add to the experience that might be helpful for my dancer–audience relationship research, that you think it will be.... “Oh my God, you know when I was doing this step...”? Nothing like that...?

Male Sophomore 2: It was interesting; I feel like we were more connected to the audience in here that we might have been on the stage just because they were so close.

Female Senior: Yes I think so too.

Female Junior: Yes.

Female Senior: You could see them.

Male Sophomore 2: And you see everybody’s faces crystal clear.

Female Senior: Yes, I think it was a good venue for this study.

[All agreed.]

Male Sophomore 2: I feel like it will connect in a theater, but it wasn’t as intimate; we could see their reaction; on, like in a stage,

Choreographer: or feel their...

Male Freshman: Yeah!!! It will be in a different mindset, like not saying we would not perform it the same, but it would not have felt the same, it would been more internal for us; would not have noticed them as much.

Female Senior: Yes, you can’t see anything.

Male Freshman: So we would have been feeling it more in our heads, more than from the audience.

Female Senior: Yes.

Male Freshman: You know?

Choreographer: Yes...very interesting. I think from choreographer points of view the venue was good because of that—that relationship. I think in the theater I would have been able to create more atmospheres in the different places. Which I think would've...I think it would have given the audience a different thing to look at and perhaps that look would have given a different emotion in terms of like.... Lighting...so different moods and different modes, like the things you see sometimes inform how you feel...it just depends.... If you were to see an ice cream shop versus an emergency door, you know? You react differently.

Male Sophomore 2: What was that comparison?

Choreographer: You know what I'm saying? Like if you see a candy shop you'll be like "Mmmm that sound so good," but if you see an emergency door you'll be like "Oooookkkkkay." It informs how you feel.

Female Freshman: [Said something which was hard to hear in the recording but it seems to be in support of the topic in discussion as we all agree and I added]

Choreographer: Absolutely! That informs how you react or how you feel, so I think in the theater we would have more opportunity to give them different visuals to inform different things, which I am glad that it was here because there was not that much lighting stuff. It was just you, your costumes, one light, and the closeness which definitely would...[I smack the surveys].... I'll see what I find out.... I'll see what happens.

Male Sophomore 1: Is that the survey?

Male Freshman: What questions were in the survey?

Choreographer: [I discuss the survey (Appendix D).]

Male Sophomore 1: Can I see what someone wrote?

Choreographer: What?

Male Sophomore 1: Can I see what someone wrote?

Choreographer: No, it's not for you, it's for me.

[All laughed.]

Female Senior: My mom loved

Choreographer: Your mom was here?

Female Senior: She watched live stream.

Choreographer: Your mom watched live stream?

Male Sophomore 1: Me too, she said “Great job!”

Choreographer: That’s awesome; okay, I am turning this off. Thank you  
guys!!!

All Dancers: Thank you!!

The post-performance dialogue offered an immense amount of insight into the dancers’ performance experience. It was fascinating to hear their feedback considering their different ages, levels of training, and emotional backgrounds. The impact the performance had on each one of them provided an artistic expression conversation which in turn created an inquiry about the performance space atmosphere and their interaction with the audience. Combining the dancers’ dialogue with the answered surveys from the audience, one might find “THAT” which ignites the dancer–audience relationship phenomenon.

#### **Answered Surveys: Audience Demographics and Responses**

On performance day 75 surveys were printed (See Appendix D). The surveys were administered and explained to the audience right before the premiere of the dance piece, *Bereave*. At the end of the performance the surveys were collected, reviewed, and tallied. Following are the results of the returned surveys. Of the 75 surveys, 58 were given out to the audience (17 surveys stayed in the box), 5 of the surveys came back blank, and 8 surveys were not returned.

Forty-five surveys were answered and returned, and of those, thirty-three offered clear feedback about the emotions perceived. The survey solicited the

audience's gender and how knowledgeable about dance they considered themselves. The audience had the ability to include how they perceived the dancers' quality of movements, facial expressions, and/or gestures. The following section shows the demographics of the audience by gender, their knowledge about dance, and emotional feedback from the performance, creating great data to comprehend the dancer–audience relationship.

### **Gender**

The audience, according to the returned survey responses, was comprised of 39 females (87%) and 6 males (13%). There are 13 individuals unaccounted for who were present at the performance, but they did not participate in answering the survey. Fig. 2 demonstrates the gender population that participated in this choreographic study.

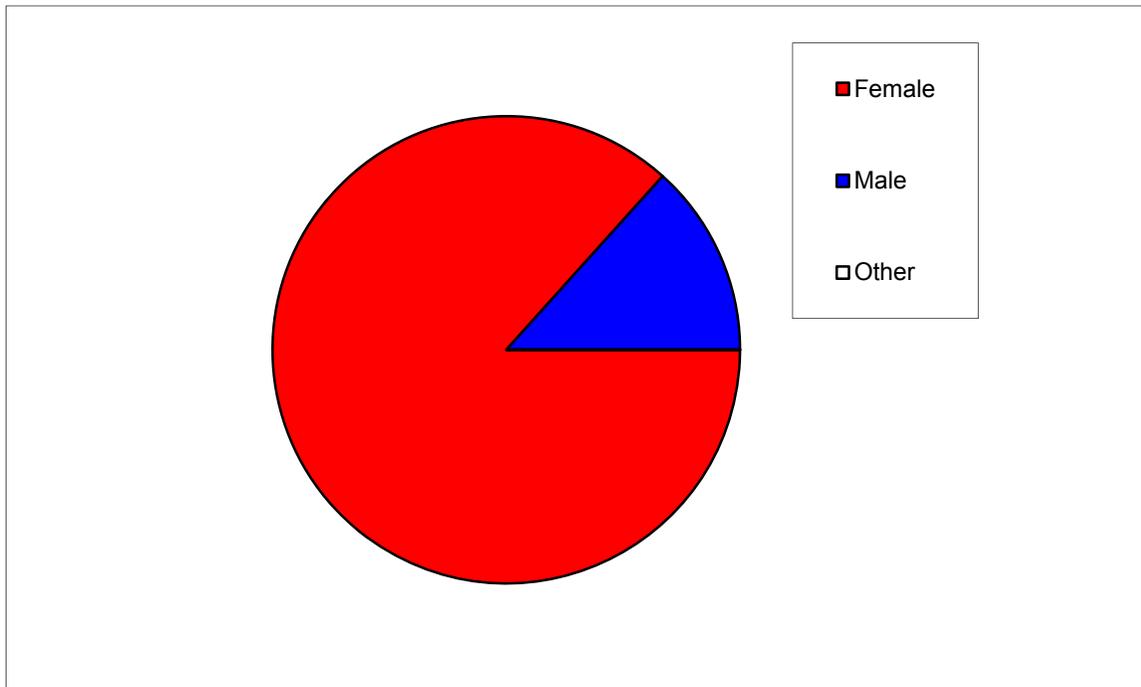


Fig. 2. Gender population among study respondents. Females 39, Males 6, Other 0.

### **Dance Knowledge**

Another question included in the survey was: How knowledgeable about dance do you consider yourself? With this question I incorporated four options: Very Knowledgeable, Somewhat Knowledgeable, A Little Knowledgeable, Not at All Knowledgeable. It was imperative for this study to identify if the audience had any knowledge or background in dance.

Of the forty-five answered surveys, thirty-three considered themselves very knowledgeable about dance. That means about 73% of the surveyed audience had a very knowledgeable perception of what they were watching. None of the answered surveys had respondents who considered themselves to

not know anything about dance. Only one was survey returned with no answer to the question. The other eleven surveyed audience members (24%) considered themselves to know somewhat or a little about dance. Fig. 3 demonstrates these results.

These findings were promising as data continued to surface during my analysis. I thought that perhaps the dancer–audience relationship inquiry, through the evocation of emotions, will appear in the emotional chart of the study. I was very enthusiastic about all the possible findings in this study, considering that forty-four members of the surveyed audience considered themselves knowledgeable about dance.

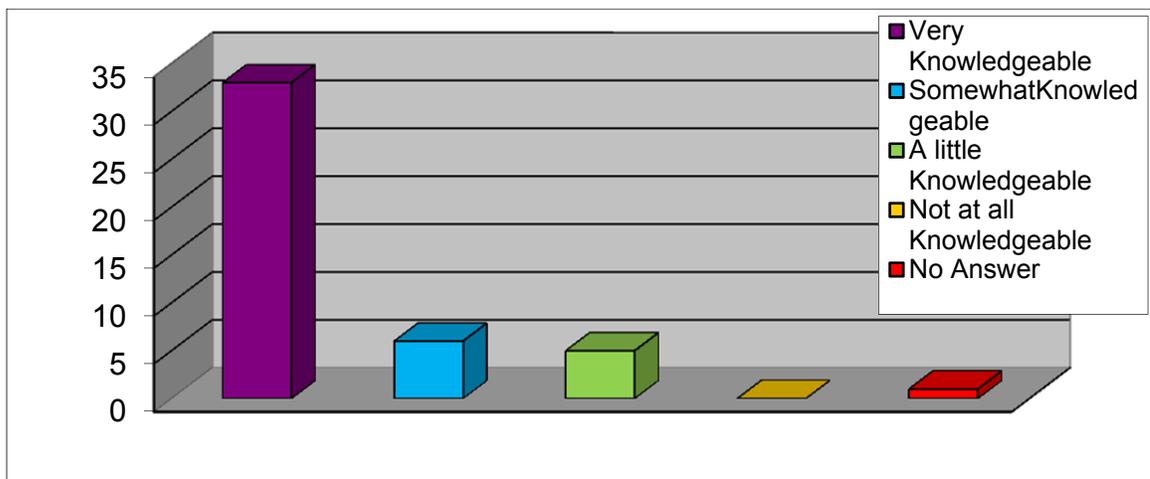


Fig. 3. Dance knowledge in study. Very Knowledgeable 33, Somewhat Knowledgeable 6, A little Knowledgeable 5, Not at all Knowledgeable 0, No Answer 1.

## Emotions

A significant part of this study rests on the surveyed audience's perception of emotions from the dance performance. As I previously mentioned, I was enthusiastic about the audience's dance knowledge that I encountered upon completing the survey response calculations. There were many variables that I had to take into consideration when looking at the audience's emotional feedback. As noted in Chapter 4 Methodology, some of the emotions I used in the survey are from Judith Lynne Hanna's book's audience survey, and others developed during the choreographic process. The tally of emotion-related results is presented in Table 1 at the end of this section.

In the first song/section of the dance, the senior Female Soloist was the main character. The group represented a variety of situations and relationships one can encounter in life. The first song/section of the dance was to the song "Alfonsina y el Mar" by Ane Brun; the song talked about drowning—leaving and never returning. The Female Senior (soloist) represented the individual who reviews the life situations, circumstances, and relationships that no longer serve him or her. When adding together the answered surveys, twenty-five (55%) perceived Withdrawal, sixteen (35%) observed Freedom, and thirteen (29%) noticed Attraction and Shame. Some of the other emotions and feedback offered in the answered survey were Yearning (the way she looked at the group), Abandoned (being left out of the group), and one of the returned surveys said that it was narrative. As a choreographer it is rewarding that at least one person

noticed the narrative component of the dance piece. Another respondent assumed Melancholy/Sad/Longing, all because of the Female Senior's facial expressions, and another surveyed person wrote Mourning. All of these perceptions correlated with her character and the coaching images the Female Senior received during the rehearsal process. Later, the possible variables for this phenomenon will be discussed.

As for the dancers as a group, the highest emotion perceived from the audience was Unconcern on fourteen (31%) answered surveys. Confrontation was cited by eleven (24%) and Aloofness was apparent to ten (22%) audience members, meaning these were the two most perceived emotions by the audience when referring to the group's dynamics. These are significant results for the first section of the dance. These results are best seen in Fig. 4, a bar graph which truly demonstrates how the audience's perception associated so well with the narrative component and the dancers' expressions. In an audience full of mostly dance-knowledgeable females, it is likely no coincidence that they were able to deduct some of the intentions of the movements and imagery. It is important to acknowledge that the most mature and advanced dancer in the cast, Female Senior, performed the soloist part. This could account for the openness and the understanding of an emotionally complex story translated into movement.

The second song/section of the choreographic work was the part where the dancers became couples, and further explored the emotions, Love and Indifference, to the music of Gert Anklam's "The Sound of Time." In the

administered survey the Cream/Gold couple, which represented Love, received twenty-eight (62%) acknowledgements of Attraction, fifteen (33%) for Joy and fifteen (33%) for Playfulness. These were three of the emotions that were allocated for love throughout the choreographic process. In other words, movements and gestures were specifically developed to represent the emotions mentioned above. Some of the movements were embraces, gentle touches and approaches, and long fluid movements with expanded dance positions.

The subsequently highest acknowledgement of a love-related emotion, with twelve (27%) audience members perceiving Attraction, was allocated to the Dark Blue Couple. This couple represented the blank canvas or the neutral space where Love and Indifference could exist. Interestingly, this couple had fifteen (33%) answered surveys perceiving Confrontation, which was one of the emotions used to describe the movement for Indifference during the choreographic process. The answered survey results for the Dark Blue Couple showed a close balance between Love and Indifference, which supports their role in the story.

The other clear results were for the Dark Brown Couple representing Indifference. Twenty-seven (60%) of the surveyed audience identified Confrontation and another twenty-one (46%) perceived Anger.

Based on these results it seems that when the cast members became couples, their intention and emotions became clearer. In the second dance, according to the audience survey responses, it seems that the emotions and

quality of movement correlating to Love and Indifference were apparent. This is evident by one of the answered survey comments: “I like the second section, seeing the relationships developed further and the strength of the dancers.”

The bar graph in Fig. 4 shows the emotions the surveyed audience related and perceived from each couple in the dance. In the first song/section the audience surveys showed more balanced perceptions of emotions from the relationship between Female Senior (soloist) and the Group. While in the second song/section the audience’s observation was more definite and clear in terms of who was representing and demonstrating the different emotions and relationships. Perhaps the choreographic process’s approach used to explore Love and Indifference gave the characters an opportunity to develop. The intended story came to life by the mere presence of an audience, where the emotions became apparent through the dancers’ movements.

Table 1. Answered Surveys' Emotions Count

	Female Soloist	Group	Dark Blue Couple	Dark Brown Couple	Cream/Gold Couple
Attraction	13	9	12	7	28
Joy	3	2	1	2	15
Playfulness	0	2	3	5	15
Freedom	16	3	3	6	3
Unconcern	3	14	7	4	3
Aloofness	10	10	6	2	4
Withdrawal	25	9	8	9	5
Anger	0	2	6	21	1
Confrontation	7	11	15	27	5
Boredom	1	1	5	1	1
Shame	13	6	3	3	2
Other	12	10	2	1	1

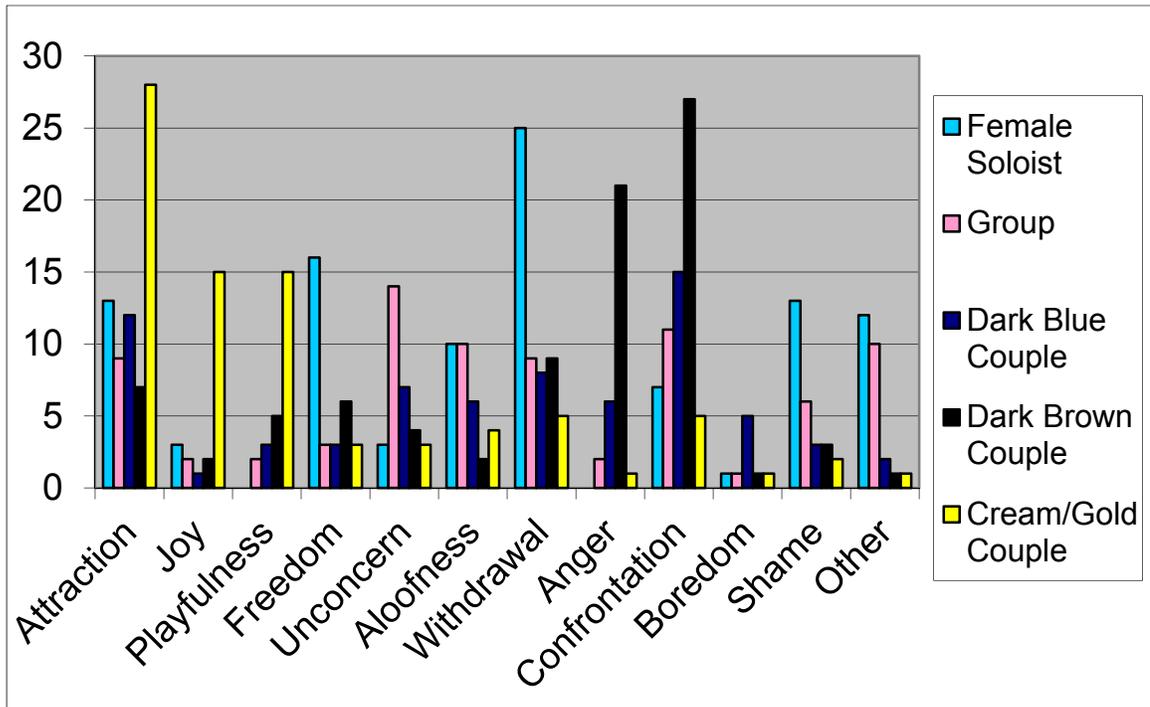


Fig. 4. Emotions created in the audience by the dancers. Female soloist and group are from the first part of the dance, and the couples are from the second part of the dance.

## 6. REFLECTIONS

As a professional artist of twenty years, I have been haunted by the connection I feel with the audience. Because I started dancing at age sixteen, understanding the technique and function of each movement was essential to my rapid growth. The understanding and application of these functionalities allowed me to ascend to professional status with an artistic versatility that otherwise would have been close to impossible to achieve. As a teacher, translating these functionalities to endowed dancers is a must. Awareness, execution, intention, and focus are key components to consider, not only for aesthetic reasons, but to create purpose with each step. During the process of achieving these components, an artistic voice starts to develop within the students/dancers allowing them to utilize an already existing vocabulary as an artistic expression. Not only do the students/dancers become informed, but their movement becomes clearer and intentional, creating a lasting connection with the observer. This is the place where an artistic expression can be nurtured. Hopefully a hunger for discovery grows within the students/dancers, allowing them to become exceptional artists.

## Overarching Analysis

For the purpose of this investigation as I developed my voice as a choreographer; the aspiration was to evoke an emotional reaction and witness how the dancer–audience relationship became alive. In my search to understand this phenomenon an eleven minute and forty seconds (11:40) narrative dance piece, *Bereave*, was born. This study was about love, indifference, and letting go of ideas, material possessions, situations, circumstances, or people that no longer support one’s journey toward the future. The audience, by way of answered surveys, identified the emotions their perceived in *Bereave*. Perhaps the relationship under observance was born from the audience’s ability to identify with basic human emotions. The dancers and audience—similar in species and capable of experiencing an equal range of emotions—created a canvas for the affirmative responses. As Jonas said, “The potent relationship between dancer and audience is at the heart of one of the oldest uses of dance” (26).

People throughout history used dance for social structure, religious purposes, and even to communicate with departed love ones. As a choreographer, I wanted to investigate what kind of relationship would come to life in a dance concert setting using a narrative modern dance. Was I able to move, touch, and inspire the observer with music, movements, and story line choices? The fastest and simplest answer would be yes. Based on the response from a female surveyed audience member who said, “the female soloist [Female Senior] made me want to dance and feel,” the solo dancer was able to create an

impact on this one surveyed audience member. Another female surveyed audience member who reported being very knowledgeable about dance said,

I felt like I was watching three story lines that conveyed withdrawal and confrontation from the soloist [Female Senior]; intensity, anger, and power from the brown couple; and playfulness and semi joyous from cream/gold couple. Making me feel like I was watching a reality show or a movie that really intrigued me.

In the comments of this observant audience member, the story line came to life as she watched the dance unfurl. An additional three female surveyed audience members who also considered themselves very knowledgeable about dance offered the following comments: “Me Encanto! [I Loved!” “I loved the music,” and “Thoroughly enjoyed it!” These were comments that made it easy to confer a simple answer to the complex dancer–audience relationship investigation. A dancer inspired an audience member to dance and feel; another audience member felt intrigued by the story line. Others simply enjoyed the performance and/or felt touched by the story.

Diverse associations to the dance were developed; the audience’s perceptions were born from their experience based on a series of choices from the choreographer’s inspiration and imagination. Those choices began the moment dancers were selected and continued all the way to the audience’s experience of the performance.



Female Freshman: Yes.

Male Freshman: Yes. Partnering.

Male Sophomore1: Because we don't have a partnering class, so everything I learned about partnering I learned from you [choreographer].

Female Senior: Yeah, pretty much.

Female Freshman: Connecting with your partner, the emotion.

Choreographer: Emotion, connecting, partnering.

The other challenge was the different class levels, but this challenge also offered the biggest opportunities of growth to cast members. During the post-performance dialogue, I was able to let the dancers know my reasons for the way I selected them and my observations throughout the process. It was stimulating to see how much the dancers felt challenged and how much the dancers could give, in terms of emotional intention, and how it translated into the steps regardless of their experience level.

It was important for this study that the human experience was highlighted more than the dancers' technique. The Male Freshman was the most challenged and the most improved from all of the dancers in *Bereave*. The Male Sophomores (1 and 2) were in the techniques classes that I taught and had worked in a previous choreography project; they were more familiar with the style, expectations, and movement aesthetics I expected. The faculty was able to see the improvement of the male dancers from the first showing (showcase) on

November 1, 2013, where the male dancers could hardly dance in unison or remember their steps. This was in great contrast to the performance day, where the males created the atmosphere that supported the story line of *Bereave*. On the other hand, the female dancers were consistent throughout the process, creating improvements throughout the rehearsal process. They also grew, but for the females the growth showed by way of their movement quality and artistic expression. This was noted by one faculty member who commented, “I am happy to see how Female Senior’s movements look so sophisticated.”

### **The Relationship Phenomenon**

The relationship between a choreographer and the dancer develops before a dancer–audience relationship is established. The ideas for the dance, the structure, and the coaching of the selected dancers fall into the realm of the choreographers’ responsibility and imagination. How the dance is portrayed and received by the observer depends on the dancer, an occurrence that often becomes a surprise element to the choreographer. Throughout both the choreographic process and the investigation of the dancer–audience relationship, there was an energetic phenomenon that took place. The phenomenon occurred by the mere presence of an observer during a dance event—whether that event was a rehearsal, a run of the entire piece, or a performance. I noticed the trend early on during the development of movements and the story line for *Bereave*. It was during the second rehearsal (September 16, 2013), in the early stages, when the emotional intention and the dancers’ cohesion started to solidify.

These events where I encountered the phenomenon gave way to a vision of the dancer–audience relationship continuum (Fig. 5):

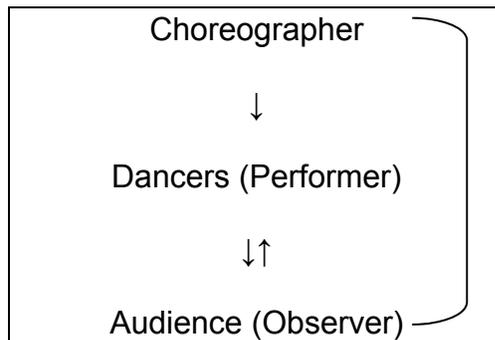


Fig. 5. Dancer–Audience relationship continuum.

In the process of rehearsing *Bereave*, whenever a group of professors or students watched the run of the piece, a new dynamic would emerge. These experiences gave me as a choreographer an insight on how the movement developed, strengthened, and perhaps needed adjustment to convey the story. As a choreographer I was then able to gain responses from the observers' (audience's) reaction to the dancers' movements that were impacted by the observers' presence. If there was an opportunity to perform *Bereave* again, as the choreographer I now have the audience and dancers' experiences from the performance as a guide to create further adjustments to the piece.

The dance piece conveyed a story based on the exploration of the human emotions Love and Indifference. The surveyed audience was 86% women who considered themselves knowledgeable about dance. This may have affected the dancer–audience relationship; as Wilson noted, “Women have been shown to be

superior to men in identifying emotion in tone of voice and facial expressions, and might actually feel more emotion overall” (149).

The performance space was an intimate dance studio converted to appear as a stage setting. It would be intriguing to perform *Bereave* in a proscenium stage to a more broadly diversified audience. Would the survey responses be the same? Would the movements and intentions of the story come across in a proscenium stage setting?

During the post-performance dancers’ discussion, Male Sophomore 2 felt interested about the connection he felt to the audience and how it might have been different if the piece was done in a proscenium stage. Female Senior and Female Junior agreed with the inquiry. Female Senior added that the studio space was a great venue for this study. Male Sophomore 2 commented on how he could see everyone’s faces crystal clearly while performing, and maybe the dance piece would connect in the theater, but maybe not as intimately because he would have not been able to see the audience from the proscenium stage. All the dancers agreed on how connected they felt to the audience. The Male Freshman added that maybe their mindset could have changed in a traditional theater and the feeling would have been different, more internal than relational. The intimacy of the venue was great to evoke the emotional relationship with the audience.

Another point of inquisitiveness that came from the venue was the ability as a choreographer to create visual atmospheres with lighting, wings, and

proscenium. With such factors, would a choreographer be able to instigate deeper feelings or reactions? Would a choreographer be able to show or inform the audience in more ways than just movements and music? This is intriguing because “emotion is not an easy principal to achieve, it takes skills,” Susan Shields said during her Vision Series talk at George Mason University Center for the Arts. Corness, Carlson, and Schiphorst noted, “The context of an audience–performer relationship can then be understood as a layer akin to this fundamental human interaction. The audience is engaged in an act of social perception in order to construct a connection with the performer” (128).

Maybe this could have also been the case with an audience with more diverse gender and less dance knowledge. Who knows? There are many variables and possibilities to explore. The more applicable statement to this study’s circumstances could be empathetic and neuroscience research.

“The audience–performer connection is, at least partly, interpersonal. This view of connection is parallel by research in neuroscience on mirror neurons. Mirror neurons are largely found in the pre-motor area of the brain and are triggered by watching goal-oriented actions in others. It is suggested that the firing of these neurons provides the viewer with a low level kinesthetic response parallel to the performer, and is therefore associated with empathy and social learning. (Corness, Carlson, and Schiphorst 128)

Given the mostly highly experienced female audience members present at the performance, the above statement supports one of the variables that occurred during this study of the dancer–audience relationship, particularly when looking at other reports on the same subject that showed “spectators watched dance, especially a type with which they were familiar, they put themselves in the place of the dancer...” (Zielinska, March 30, 2012), making it easier to understand and identify with what is going on the stage.

### **Authenticity**

This investigation of the dancer–audience relationship depended on the emotions evoked in and perceived by the audience during the performance. When looking at the outcomes, I also need to consider authenticity from the dancers, from the movement, from the choreographer and his intentions to evaluate the emotions evoked and perceived. Authenticity is defined as “The quality of being authentic, or entitled to acceptance, authoritative or duly authorized; in accordance with fact; true in substance; genuine, as being real, actual, reality” (“Authenticity”).

In a study by Clare Dyson, “The ‘Authentic Dancer’ as a Tool for Audience Engagement,” the questions on how a performance is “viewed,” “witnessed,” and “experienced” were explored to understand the audience–performer dynamics. Dyson explains, “with historical precedents in theater and post-modern dance the ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ dancer is a performer who is able to connect via immediacy, engaging their audience not by illusion, but through a visceral connection of the

everyday” (3). This statement correlates with Susan Shields’ description of dancers being “emotional athletes which hold emotions of the body a bit longer than most people.”

Dyson interviewed a few professional dancers to get an insight into performer authenticity in their profession. Their general consensus was that they needed to “be whatever was required” (8). One of the performers interviewed said that authenticity depends on what the choreographer believes is authentic. The same performer also questioned the venue in which a dance is presented: “If you are presenting something in a proscenium arch—how can it ever be authentic? You are presenting it in a performance paradigm and repeating it each night” (8). This is when the professionals’ skills, acquired with years of experience, come into play. As Susan Shields said, “When working with professional dancers, it is a gift.” Shields described how the movement takes on shapes and meaning as soon as the professional has the opportunity to learn the step.

During the post-performance dancers’ discussion with *Bereave*’s pre-professional college students, the authenticity conversation played out in the following way:

Choreographer: Why do you think it was special?

Male Sophomore1: Because there was an audience to watch me.

Choreographer: The audience was watching you?

Dancers: Yes, yes.

Female Freshman: And we were in costumes and lights, and the whole experience, I don't know what is it called?

Choreographer: Costumes, and lights?

Male Freshman: Process?

Female Freshman: The whole....

Male Sophomore1: Atmosphere.

Female Freshman: Atmosphere, yes.

Choreographer: So you felt like you had an atmosphere because you had the costumes, because you had?

Female Freshman: It was more like we were on "stage."

Choreographer: You felt like you were on stage?

Female Freshman: Yes, like performing it.

Female Senior: Yes, you are more vulnerable when you are performing it rather than when you are in the studio.

Female Freshman: And I feel it's a lot easier to perform when there are people in the room.

Choreographer: When you say "perform," what does that mean?

Female Freshman: Like express how....

Choreographer: Express?

Female Freshman: How you [choreographer] wanted it to be portrayed.

Choreographer: Like how I want it or you want to?

Female Freshman: Both.

Choreographer: Both. Okay, how about you?

Female Senior: I don't know, 'cause when I perform it doesn't matter, well obviously, the rehearsal process you are always trying to do what the choreographer wants, and what they are telling you to do, but when it comes to the performance I forget all of that, and I do what I feel. You know? I rehearse the step so I know the steps, but when I'm performing and what emotion I'm portraying and what is happening, it's me in the moment, you know? It's not....

Choreographer: Is that how you felt tonight?

Female Senior: Yes!

Choreographer: Do you feel satisfied? Do you feel?

Female Senior: Yeah! Well, I was saying this the other day actually after the show. It's like when I leave the show it's usually one of two emotions. I am either really giddy and really adrenaline high. Like I want to do everything right now, I want to run a marathon, I want to...like really happy or I leave very like somber like melancholy, I don't know, almost like that's the best feeling but I can't have that in normal life, that only happens in like a show type setting. When I am on

stage, you know, that precious moment, you know, so when I leave I'm kind of like, well I live here and not there, you know, does that make sense?

Choreographer: Yes!

Female Senior: Like I'm always proud of myself, and always feel like I accomplish something, but sometimes I leave sad, I don't know.

Choreographer: Why do you think the sadness?

Female Senior: MMM.

Choreographer: How do you feel tonight?

Female Senior: Right now?

Choreographer: Hum.

Female Senior: I feel...a little bit of both of those things, so not completely one, not completely the other, I don't know. Like I have the adrenaline rush, 'cause I...you know, that gives you that rush, but that piece in particular I feel like I leave and I feel.... Like my character leaves, leaves all that behind and that's kind of what I feel about the piece at this point now, like I left it behind and stuff and you know moving on, like it affected me and is there but I am moving on, I am learning from it.

## Conclusions

Whether a dancer is professional or pre-professional and whether an audience member is knowledgeable or not about dance, a connection to human emotions is hard to avoid. In the journey of the dancer–audience relationship, by investigating the possibilities of what Love and Indifference could be as movements, it was inevitable to ignore the need for humans to communicate and express emotions. As I choreographer the creation of my “inner life into a physical reality” (Shields) was accomplished where the audience perceived and felt an emotional intention.

Now my curiosity lays in how and when the many variables left to explore in the dancer–audience relationship could be discovered. After this journey, I felt a similar sensation to what one of the surveyed audience member felt about *Bereave*: “I loved the return to the beginning at the end, it’s like the piece was put in fast forward motion.” As a choreographer the need to investigate this phenomenon feels like a never-ending inquiry to discover the indescribable and irreproducible magnetism between a dancer and the audience.

## APPENDIX A. TRANSLATION OF SONG “ALFONSINA Y EL MAR”

“Alfonsina y el mar” (“Alfonsina and the Sea”) composed by Ariel Ramirez

Original	English
Por la blanda arena Que lame el mar Su pequeña huella No vuelve más Un sendero solo De pena y silencio llegó Hasta el agua profunda Un sendero solo De penas mudas llegó Hasta la espuma.	On the soft sand That is licked by the sea Her small footprint Will never return A solitary path Of sorrow and silence arrived At the depths of the ocean A solitary path Of muted sorrows rose To the sea foam
Sabe Dios qué angustia Te acompañó Qué dolores viejos Calló tu voz Para recostarte Arrullada en el canto De las caracolas marinas La canción que canta En el fondo oscuro del mar La caracola.	God knows the angst Which accompanied you The ancient pain Which quieted your voice To let you rest With the song Of the sea shell The song played At the dark depths of the sea The Sea Shell
Te vas Alfonsina Con tu soledad ¿Qué poemas nuevos Fuíste a buscar? Una voz antigua De viento y de sal Te requiebra el alma Y la está llevando Y te vas hacia allá Como en sueños Dormida, Alfonsina Vestida de mar.	You are leaving Alfonsina With your loneliness Which new poems Did you go find? An ancient voice Made of wind and salt Breaks your soul And takes it away And you float away As in dreams Asleep, Alfonsina Dressed by the sea
Cinco sirenitas Te llevarán Por caminos de algas Y de coral	Five mermaids Will take you Through paths covered in seaweed And coral

Y fosforescentes  
Caballos marinos harán  
Una ronda a tu lado  
Y los habitantes  
Del agua van a jugar  
Pronto a tu lado.

Bájame la lámpara  
Un poco más  
Déjame que duerma  
Nodriza, en paz  
Y si llama él  
No le digas que estoy  
Dile que Alfonsina no vuelve  
Y si llama él  
No le digas nunca que estoy  
Di que me he ido.

Te vas Alfonsina  
Con tu soledad  
¿Qué poemas nuevos  
Fueste a buscar?  
Una voz antigua  
De viento y de sal  
Te requiebra el alma  
Y la está llevando  
Y te vas hacia allá  
Como en sueños  
Dormida, Alfonsina  
Vestida de mar

And fluorescent  
Sea horses will make  
A ring around you  
And the inhabitants  
Of the sea will soon play  
By your side

Lower the lamp  
A little more  
Let me sleep  
In peace, nurse  
And if he calls  
Don't tell him I am here  
Tell him Alfonsina has left  
And if he ever calls  
Don't ever tell him I'm here  
Tell him I've left

You are leaving Alfonsina  
With your loneliness  
Which new poems  
Did you go find?  
An ancient voice  
Made of wind and salt  
Breaks your soul  
And takes it away  
And you float away  
As in dreams  
Asleep, Alfonsina  
Dressed by the sea

This song translation is by Javier Avellan Veloz.

**APPENDIX B. PROGRAM FROM *BEREAVE*'S INAUGURAL PERFORMANCE**

**Studio Series  
Dance Performance Studio  
December 9, 2013**

**Sungrazer**

Choreography: Karen Reedy  
Music: "Metro Chabacano" by Javier Álvarez  
Dancers: Katie Askegaard, Sajen Banister, Celine Berthaud, Nicole Daniell,  
Sharon Frometa, Juliana Gorman, Hannah Myers, Candace Perry,  
Marisa Righi, Charlotte Samaroo, Lucy Spring, Willow Williams  
*Understudies: Audrey Greene, Marisa Post*

**Abrazos**

Choreography: Jim Lepore  
Music: "Hymn" and "Shaman" by Toby Twining  
Dancers: Celine Berthaud, Nicole Daniell, Hannah Kearney,  
Madison Obrien, Candace Perry, Marisa Post, Marisa Righi,  
Bronwyn Updike  
*Understudies: Daphne Batista, Jessica Eckardt, Anna Hulse*

**Dance of the Hours**

Choreography: Marissa Graham  
Music: "Dance of the Hours" composed by Amilcare Ponchielle, and  
performed by Ina Mirtcheva (piano), Benjamin Mitchell (percussion),  
Yana Hristova (flute)  
Dancers: Tianna Bohannon, Maggie Fischer, Nicole Montano,  
Sarah Beth Penny, Elysia Roscoe

### **First Fives**

**Choreography:** Susan Shields

**Music:** "Hook" by Graham Fitkin

**Dancers:** Tianna Bohannon, Aaron Carlstrom, Chloe Cornelius,  
Nicole Daniell, Caila Darche, Joseph Day, Maggie Fischer,  
Taylor Haines, Gaby Marrapodi, Hannah Myers, Sara Beth Penny,  
Allison Podolsky, Charlotte Samaroo, Chloe, Singer, Lucy Spring,  
Beth Whelan, Willow Williams

### **Bereave**

**Choreography:** Luis Torres

**Music:** "Alfonsina y El Mar" by Ane Brun and "The Sound of Time"  
baritone saxophone solo by Gert Anklam

**Dancers:** 

## APPENDIX C. SURVEY BY DR. HANNA

(A) Check (✓) emotion(s) conveyed on stage in the dance before first intermission	(B) State <i>place</i> in dance where emotion is displayed, e.g., beginning (b) middle (m) end (e) throughout (t)	(C) State <i>how dancer expressed emotion</i> (e.g., through which body parts, kinds of movement, or other means)	(D) How did <i>you feel</i> in response to the emotion(s) conveyed?
anger			
boredom			
caring			
competitiveness			
disgust			
ecstasy			
eroticism			
fatigue			
happiness			
nostalgia			
playfulness			
pride			
sadness			
shame			
surprise			
vitality			
other			
no emotion			

So that your views can be placed in context, please provide us with some information about yourself. Check the appropriate places and fill in additional information in the places provided.

Birthplace:  
 rural  
 urban  
if U.S., state \_\_\_\_\_  
If outside U.S.,  
country \_\_\_\_\_

Sex:  
 female  
 male

Age:  
 under 20 years  
 20-30  
 31-40 years  
 41-65 years  
 over 65

Religious upbringing; note sect  
 Christian \_\_\_\_\_  
 Jewish \_\_\_\_\_  
 Muslim \_\_\_\_\_  
 Hindu \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 None

How do you identify yourself in  
terms of ethnic group (for example,  
Anglo-American, Afro-American,  
Navajo, Japanese-American)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Education:  
 high school  
 some college  
 college graduate  
 postgraduate

How knowledgeable about dance do  
you consider yourself?  
 very  
 somewhat  
 not at all

Family income:  
 under \$20,000  
 \$21,000-\$30,000  
 \$31,000-\$40,000  
 over \$40,000

Are you a Smithsonian Series  
Subscriber?  
 yes  
 no

How did you learn about this  
performance? \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

If you wish information on this study, please give your

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

*NOTE: Information furnished by you on this survey is purely voluntary and  
will be used only for the purpose stated. Personally identifying information will  
be used only for supplying you with information on this study.*

Source: Hanna, Judith Lynne. *The Performer-Audience Connection: Emotion to  
Metaphor in Dance and Society*. Austin: University of Texas, 1983. 230-31.

**APPENDIX D. SURVEY CONDUCTED AFTER PERFORMANCE OF *BEREAVE***

*It is my interest to learn more about the audience–dancer relationship. As part of my MFA thesis I would like to collect some information about your experience after watching the dance piece “Bereave”. It would be of great help if you would take the time to fill out this survey. Thank you for your help, and I hope you enjoy the performance.*

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Place a check next to the emotion conveyed in the dance. If an emotion was not conveyed, then leave it blank.	Describe how the dancer(s) expressed emotion ( i.e. <i>body part, through the quality of movement, facial expressions or other means</i> )		Describe how the dancer(s) expressed emotion (i.e. <i>body part, through the quality of movement, facial expressions or other means</i> )			How did you feel in response to the emotion(s) conveyed?
	<u>FIRST SECTION</u> First Song		<u>SECOND SECTION</u> Second Song			
	<b>Female Soloist (Dark Blue)</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Dark Blue Couple</b>	<b>Dark Brown Couple</b>	<b>Cream/Gold Couple</b>	
<b>Attraction</b>						
<b>Joy</b>						

<b>Playfulness</b>						
<b>Freedom</b>						
<b>Unconcern</b>						
<b>Aloofness</b>						
<b>Withdrawal</b>						
<b>Anger</b>						
<b>Confrontation</b>						

<b>Boredom</b>						
<b>Shame</b>						
<b>Other</b>						

*Please circle your gender:*      **Male**      **Female**      **Other**

16 *How knowledgeable about dance do you consider yourself?*   **Very**      **Somewhat**      **A little**      **Not at all**

*Additional Comments:*

***Thank you for your Participation***

Note: The actual surveys were printed on single sheets of 11 x 17" paper.

# APPENDIX E. COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI) COMPLETION REPORT

## COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI) HUMAN RESEARCH CURRICULUM COMPLETION REPORT Printed on: 07/13/2014

LEARNER:	Luis R Torres Ortiz (ID: 3795162)
DEPARTMENT:	Dance
PHONE:	7039308288
EMAIL:	ltorres@umiami.edu
INSTITUTION:	George Mason University
EXPIRATION DATE:	10/09/2015

GROUP 1 SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH : This group is appropriate for Social & Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel.

COURSE TAG:	Basic Course /1
PASS EDITION:	10/09/2013
REFERENCE ID:	11422606

REQUIRED MODULES	DATE COMPLETED
Introduction	10/06/13
Critical Competence in Research	10/07/13
History and Ethical Principles - SBE	10/07/13
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE	10/07/13
The Regulations - SBE	10/08/13
Assessing Risk - SBE	10/08/13
Informed Consent - SBE	10/09/13
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE	10/09/13
George Mason University	10/09/13

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI Program participating institution or be a paid Independent Learner. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI Program course title is unethical, and may be considered research misconduct by your institution.

Paul Benschwege, Ph.D.  
Professor, University of Miami  
Director, Office of Research Education  
CITI Program Course Coordinator

Collaborative Institutional  
Training Initiative  
at the University of Miami

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## BIOGRAPHY

Luis R. Torres-Ortiz, born in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, just completed his 11<sup>th</sup> season as a featured dancer with The Washington Ballet (TWB). Prior to joining TWB, Torres was a soloist with Ballet Theatre of Maryland (1995-1997) in Annapolis, Maryland, and performed as a soloist and principal dancer with Ballet Arizona from 1997-2003. Roles have been created for him by a number of world-renowned choreographers such as Moses Pendleton, Ib Anderson, Dwight Rhoden, Edward Liang, and Annabelle Lopez-Ochoa to mention a few. Torres began his training in Puerto Rico under the direction of Elizabeth Calero before accepting a Roberto Clemente scholarship transfer to Point Park University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he had the opportunity to train under the tutelage of Roberto Munoz. During that time he received the Outstanding Sophomore of the Year award, adding to his scholarship aid. A few of his featured roles during his tenure at TWB include Snow King, Drosselmeyer and Anacostian Man in *The Nutcracker*, Tom Buchanan in the world premiere of Septime Webre's *The Great Gatsby*, Lord Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Captain Hook in *Peter Pan*, and the Cheshire Cat in the world premiere of *ALICE* (in wonderland). Torres received a Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies (BIS) with a concentration in dance and psychology from Arizona State University (ASU). Currently he is an adjunct faculty professor at George Mason University, a full-time faculty member at The Washington School of Ballet (TWSB), and a guest teacher and choreographer throughout the Maryland/Virginia/DC area.